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MODERN PARIS

SOME SIDELIGHTS ON ITS INNER LIFE

BY

ROBERT HARBOROUGH SHERARD

Author of "The Life of Oscar Wilde," "My Friends the French," "Twenty Years in Paris," etc., etc.

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CLIFFORD'S INN

TO

MY OLD FRIEND AND COMRADE

MORLEY ROBERTS

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

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MODERN PARIS

SOME SIDELIGHTS ON ITS INNER LIFE

CHAPTER I

The Pride of Descent—The Pork-butcher and the Duke—French Plain Speaking—Marriage or *Union Libre*—Napoleon and General Burgoyne—The Emperor and the Court Physician—Joseph Renaud and "The Feminist's Catechism"—Women and their Pets—A Feminist Committee—A Curious Divorce Case—English and French Wives—Alphonse and Julia Daudet—"Numa Roumestan"—Julia Daudet's Fine Book—Literature in France—And in England—The Writer and the Flower-woman—Letters under the Kings—Too Late or Too Early

CYCLING away from the boulevards some little while ago, I happened to pass through a village in the Epte valley. The whole of that morning my mind had been dwelling on the hereditary principle, and it seemed to me something of a coincidence when, looking up, my eyes fell on a huge sign painted up against the front of one of the houses in the main street.

This notice announced that this was the place of business of Monsieur Théophile So-and-So, pork-butcher, "who," so it continued, "kills pigs in the same satisfactory way as his grandfather used to do" (*tue les cochons comme son grandpère*) "and makes black puddings as good as his father's" (*fait les boudins comme son père*).

It seemed to me that not even the most rabid Radical could object to the hereditary principle as

exemplified here, where the descendant of a line of eminent men only refers to his ancestors because he claims to be their equal in the virtues and pre-eminencies for which they were distinguished in their day.

Here was cheerful optimism which contrasts agreeably with the spirit which permeated a remark once made in a boulevard club by a French duke of very illustrious name, but of very poor physique. One of the splendidly built footmen of that club had just left the room, after handing the dwarfish and humpbacked aristocrat his glass of mineral water—which was all that he was allowed to drink —and the *petit duc*, pointing after him, remarked to the men who were sitting round, and who all bore names which figure in the Almanach de Gotha :

" That is how we make them; and," he added, pointing to himself, " this is how they make us."

He meant, of course, that gentlemen breed fine children from women of the working classes, while from the illicit unions of menials with ladies of high rank very poor specimens of humanity are bred. It was not a very nice thing to say in a club of gentlemen, and in England, of course, would have been resented. In France, however, plain speaking on matters of this kind is not considered a social offence. It is well known that love affairs between *soubrettes* and gentlemen, and between *grandes dames* and men-servants have existed, do exist and always will exist. Now your Frenchman does not see any reason for glossing over notorious facts.

Freedom of speech is a characteristic of the Parisian, especially with reference to matters which

in England are secluded in the breasts of men and women.

Even after many years' residence in Paris, my British reserve is, I confess, often shocked at this plain speaking. Not very long ago, for instance, I was startled on hearing a well-known French gentleman, who is both an aristocrat and an artist, remark to some friends of his who were standing round him in one of the Duchesse de D——'s *salons* on the night of a ball, "That is a very pretty woman. I think that I shall undertake her." He referred to a beautiful young married woman who had just passed through the room where we were standing. His exact words in French were : "*Je crois que je vais l'entreprendre.*" His proposal was to lay siege to her heart with an ultimate object which need not be further defined. What seemed so strange to me—accustomed though I am to the French candour—was that he should deem it necessary to inform us of his projects. In England such a remark in such a place would have been considered as in the worst possible taste. In France, as on this occasion, it was received with some encouraging sniggers. The attitude of the man's associates seemed to invite him to "go in and win." The Frenchman of a certain class does not believe in the virtue of his women any more than in his own. I saw it stated the other day in a paper that ninety-five per cent. of married people in Paris are unfaithful to their spouses. I made a point of consulting a number of people as to this statement. "*C'est bien possible*" (It's quite likely) was the general comment. One man, but he was a cynic, exclaimed : "What a

low estimate ! I should have said that one hundred and five per cent. was nearer the mark."

The general tendency in France seems towards the abolition of marriage. In England there appears to be a growing distaste amongst strong-minded women for this form of bondage. A short while ago I was at a country house where one of the guests was a well-known suffragette, who is an able writer and public speaker, a kind, motherly woman. She openly described marriage as the certain road to mutual unhappiness. She set a period of five years as the extreme limit at which the woman would bitterly rue her bargain. She did not suggest any alternative arrangement, nor did she preach the advantages of the *union libre.* This form of sexual alliance appears, by the way, to be growing largely in favour with the men of the British working classes, a fact which will not surprise those who have studied the characteristics of the women in that rank of life. People who have investigated the conditions of child-life in the British Isles will more readily understand the distaste of working men for marriage. Not very long ago a gentleman, who had just been appointed Justice of the Peace for one of our great Midland cities, was received by the chairman of the borough bench, the well-known brother of a great English statesman. The chairman told him that each magistrate had his own particular views on the class of offence which should be most severely repressed. "Some of us," he said, "are very down on drunkenness, others on the use of foul language. Some are most severe in cases of cruelty to children, others find no punishment sharp enough for those who ill-treat

animals. Have you any particular dislike ?" The new J.P. answered that he should feel inclined to act with special severity towards wife-beaters. " Well," said the chairman, " we all start with that idea. But after you have sat three months on the —— bench you won't wonder how men can beat their wives. What will fill you with astonishment is that they don't as a general rule murder them."

We seem indeed in England to have advanced far beyond those days at the beginning of last century when the adoration of husbands for their wives was so intense that cases of suicide were common on the part of men who survived their spouses. This circumstance attracted the attention of Napoleon, who, apropos of the suicide of General Burgoyne, who shot himself on his wife's grave, remarked on the admirable tenacity of purpose which the English were displaying. " They do not choose," he said, " to live if their lives cannot be just what they wish them to be," and he spoke of Burgoyne's act as one of heroism. When poor, weak General Boulanger shot himself in Brussels under similar circumstances nobody had a good word to say for him. His deed was described as cowardly, as the best proof that he had never been fitted for the rôle as a leader of men to which he had aspired. " To kill oneself for a woman ! " It was considered a hopelessly foolish act. Yet the great Napoleon considered suicide under such circumstances to be brave and noble, and bravery was a quality which he held to be one of the rarest of human characteristics. Many of his sayings are recorded which prove that his observation of men had led him to the conviction that most of us are

cowards, nor did he claim personal courage for himself.

Apropos of conjugal fidelity, by the way, it was Napoleon who rather naïvely asked a certain Court physician whether men of seventy could have children. "Sometimes," the doctor answered. "And a man of eighty," pursued the Emperor. "Always, your Majesty," answered the Court physician.

Apropos, Jean-Joseph Renaud, the champion fencer, points out in a recent pamphlet of his, entitled "The Feminist's Catechism" (*Le Catéchisme féministe*), that the severity of the French marriage laws, as referring to women and as edicted in the Code Napoleon, was due to the Emperor's very poor opinion of the fair sex. Renaud suggests that Napoleon's life in Egypt had imbued him with Oriental ideas about women. I should say that it was rather the conduct of his wives and the shameless behaviour of the women of his Court. Renaud reminds one of the "deplorable women who surrounded the Emperor." It was Cambacères who submitted a draft of the clauses dealing with marriage to the Emperor, and who was rebuked by his imperial master for having entirely ignored "the husband's authority" (*la puissance maritale*). Cambacères was sent back to put the thing into its present shape. "What I want," said the Emperor, "and what I will have is that a husband shall have the right to say to his wife, 'No, madame, you shall not go out!' or 'You shall go out!' without having to give any reason for his wish."

"Thus it was," says Renaud, "that the husband's authority came to be."

It is a matter of common observation that the

men who most despise women are the men whom women most adulate. Nobody had a poorer opinion of the female sex *en bloc* than Napoleon, and was ever a male in the history of humanity more solicited than he. So it is greatly to Monsieur Jean-Joseph Renaud's credit that he should be such an ardent suffragist as he reveals himself in his "Catechism," because I should say that there are few men in Paris, on the boulevards or off, who are more admired and beloved by the fair *Parisiennes* than he is. When he appears sword in hand, dressed cap-à-pie in his immaculate white fencing suit, on the platform at some fashionable Parisian fencing tournament, from the breast of almost every woman present a sigh of emotion exudes. "*Oh! le beau garçon!*": "*Mon Dieu, qu'il est bien!*": these and other exclamations make themselves heard. And the fact is that his perfect figure and his masterly handling of the sword make him very agreeable to contemplate. Well, this idol of the fair sex has constituted himself in France their champion, and if he be as successful in feminism as he has been in fencing, such Frenchwomen as feel they have grievances under existing conditions may consider their prospects pleasing. He is on the council and an active member of a committee which was formed on the initiative of Monsieur René de Chavagnes, and which includes Monsieur Henri Coulon, president, Madame Avril de Sainte-Croix, vice-president, Victor Margueritte, Lucien Le Foyer and himself as *membres du bureau*; René de Chavagnes as secretary, and as active members, Paul Adam, Henri Bataille, Jules Bois, Armand Charpentier, Lucien Descaves, Jean Finot,

Leopold Lacour, the judge, Sebastien-Charles Leconte, Pierre Louys, Maurice Maeterlinck, Paul Margueritte, Octave Mirbeau, Charles Morice, Raymond Poincaré, Marcel Prevost, the famous "good judge," President Magnaud, President Seré de Rivières, C. M. Savarit, Doctor Toulouse, Octave Uzanne, and Mesdames Oddo-Deflou, Hera Mirtel, J. Schmahl and Séverine. The committee of "feminist notabilities" has already presented to the French Parliament a Bill of marriage reform, certain clauses of which, so Renaud tells us, are shortly coming to the vote. The three main points aimed at in this draft Bill are (1) to make the marriage ceremony as inexpensive and little troublesome as possible; (2) to grant equal rights, equal duties and equal responsibilities to husband and wife; (3) "to regulate divorce so as to make it a form of separation worthy of two conscient beings and not the abominable farce that it is at present."

I wonder if, when the committee were considering this last point, they had before them the report of a divorce case which was tried in Paris, before President Katz, the judge, at the Fourth Chamber, early this year. The following, slightly modified for English readers, is President Katz's judgment, giving relief to the wife, who was the plaintiff:

"Seeing that the marriage of the spouses X——, which took place on 19th November 1907, has not been a happy one;

"That cohabitation barely lasted for one year;

"That the lady X——, albeit she had waited till the age of forty-five before marrying, reproached her husband, a man of the same age as herself, for not visiting her chamber every day;

"That the result of this conduct was that scenes of violence occurred which broke up this union."

For these reasons President Katz declared the marriage dissolved.

The proceedings before the Fourth Chamber were exceedingly amusing. Madame X—— (the French law does not allow the names of parties in divorce proceedings to be published) was represented by a barrister called Tichet. Maître Tichet argued that the husband's indifference was an outrage to the wife. She wished to receive his visit every day. That was what she got married for. It was on her doctor's advice.

Maître de Cöene, the husband's counsel, retorted that the man was not to blame, that he had done his utmost. But the court thought it fair to Madame X—— to give her a chance of finding a more attentive spouse.

I am afraid that the committee of "feminist notabilities" only sees the woman's side of the question. At least such is the opinion that one derives from reading Renaud's "Catéchisme." It is a very able exposé in the form of questions and answers of the claims of the protagonists of Women's Rights. Frequent references are made to the superior position held by married women in England, and these references show that Monsieur Renaud has allowed certain legal points to escape his attention. Where, for instance, a woman is married in France without any marriage contract, she is entitled at the death of her husband to one-half of all his property, whether she has contributed to its acquisition or not. This is not the case in England, where the husband can leave his wife his second-best bed with the furniture for all part and share. And again in England there is this

scandalous injustice to women that where the wife has property and the husband becomes destitute she may be called upon by law to contribute to his maintenance—in the workhouse. To mulct a rich woman to the extent of five or six shillings a week to keep the man whose name she bears, and who may be the father of her children, from starving in the street, is—as was pointed out in a recent letter to *The Daily Mail* by one of our ardent suffragettes—a cruel abuse of male privilege, and such an abuse does not—to the credit of the French legislators—exist on the other side of the Channel.

Most of the men on the committee to which Renaud belongs were men whom I used to meet at Daudet's house sixteen or fifteen years ago. I have no doubt that several of them imbibed their feminist opinions from his teachings. He was greatly in favour of the absolute equality of the sexes in marriage. He said marriage should be a partnership. It was so in his case, an ideal union of man and woman. Zola described Daudet's marriage to me as "a final and supreme piece of good fortune." Daudet often said to me: "I was fortunate enough to win her and it has been the greatest blessing that has been accorded to me in the course of a most happy and successful life." Yet there was an entire dissimilitude in the characters of Daudet and his wife. Madame Daudet is a typical Northern woman, with great practical common-sense and uncompromising logic, reserved, undemonstrative, cool and equable, while her husband was capricious, romantic, superstitious, exuberant, guided by impulse rather than by

calculation. Daudet felt this difference between their characters to be so marked that he often desired a more active literary collaboration with his wife. Edmond de Goncourt once told me that when Daudet was dramatising "Numa Roumestan" he suggested to him that it would be very interesting if his wife would write the part of Numa's wife, the Northern woman brought up in monogamous surroundings, whilst he should analyse himself in the part of the Southerner, with the Southerner's penchant for polygamy. Readers of "Numa Roumestan" will remember that the Roumestan *ménage* is an example of the great domestic unhappiness which an entire dissimilitude of character between husband and wife may produce, and in that respect is the exact contrary of the *ménage* of its creator.

Madame Daudet once wrote to me to tell me, in answer to a question of mine on her literary life, that she had always been more a housewife than a writer. I used to admire her immensely as I watched in the old days her solicitude for her husband. I remember writing: "Her constant watchfulness over him, her motherly care of the dear invalid, discreet, careful, veiled, but constant, are admirable to behold. Now, there is a draughty door to be closed, now a glaring lamp to be shaded, and all these things are done naturally, quietly without ostentation, as the most obvious duties." I used to consider her the most unselfish of women, and wrote again: "She listens when she might speak: she contents herself with the part of a Stella, although entitled to the rôle of a de Stael. In these days of noisy, assertive, unsexed

feminity, she is pre-eminent among the women who by their manners reclaim the respect due to their sex. Julia Daudet is the living answer to Sarah Grand. She is Wordsworth's Dorothy, with a note of elegance superadded." As to her unselfishness, Daudet once told me that in the days of their straitened circumstances, when he used to take a louis d'or for his minor pleasures from the slender, common fund, Julia Daudet from time to time would draw a threepenny piece for an indispensable omnibus fare.

Readers of "Numa Roumestan" might pencil on the last leaf of their copy of that book: "Fell by a woman's hand." That is to say, those who like poetic justice. It is a notorious fact that Numa was drawn from Gambetta, and Gambetta, we all know, perished from blood-poisoning caused by a wound from the pistol of a jealous woman.

Julia Daudet is very modest about her literary achievements. Yet one of the most beautiful books which appeared last year (1910) in France is from her pen. This is her book of reminiscences of her husband's literary friends: "Souvenirs Autour d'un Groupe Littéraire." No lover of Alphonse Daudet should fail to read this book, which in many pages is a tender and beautiful tribute to the dear man and great artist.

"Now that my dear husband is no longer here," she writes in 1908, "away from his vigilant presence, desolate and *désemparée*, I well realise that all that I did in life, my household work, my coquetry about my person and about literature, all was done in view of that loving approval of his which never failed me, and now I see and feel the

emptiness of every effort, the discouragement of no longer working to please him."

Lower down she writes : " Vanished ! I had at my side a charming being whom sickness never rendered plaintive nor desolate. We walked along side by side on the brink of a precipice which we could not see, and now it is he who has been the first to fall over, body and soul ; so that I no longer hear his voice, the beatings of his heart, which so often were the rhythm of my slumbers. It was a shadow then that walked by my side, a shadow which for thirty years animated me with its magic presence, taught me to love nature and the art of observation, perfected me, a thinking, acting shadow whose slightest gesture evoked by me to-day seems as vast and as dim as the space which separates us. . . .

" During thirty years of married life I never for one hour felt time hang heavy on my hands. . . . Since he is no longer there I see him once more all decked out in youth : brilliant, sparkling, almost troubling to a simple little body as I was. . . . He often used to tell me that I had perfected in him the art of writing : he, on his side, had taught me know life. . . . I have never known a human being of greater sensitiveness, of greater experience."

The lines in which she describes his death are beautiful. As I read them I remembered that at the very moment when this dreadful thing was happening I was standing at the front door of the house in the rue de l'Université, with my hand on the bell. I have never been able to establish to my satisfaction what it was that made me pause,

withdraw my hand and walk away. If I had rung the bell, its peal would have coincided with his fall.

I would recommend the perusal of "Souvenirs Autour d'un Groupe Littéraire" to the strong-minded women in England who are howling down marriage. It gives an insight into the felicity that springs from the union of a man and a woman where neither tries to dominate the other.

Julia Daudet's little sketches of the men of letters who used to frequent her husband's house are literary gems. She has a wonderful critical faculty. And the book will be a revelation to many English people, as showing the importance which in France is attached to literature. Here is a picture of a wealthy home where literature was almost the sole preoccupation and interest of everybody. Here we have dinner-parties where literature is the topic, and soirées of which the attraction is the presence of poets and novelists who recite their verses or discuss their books. It sounds very tedious, no doubt, but the strange thing is that everybody enjoys it, and takes it seriously and feels that the cause of art is being advanced. In England we have an objection to "shop," and I remember how very dismal we all found those functions at the Authors' Club in its early days, which, I think, were called "Uncut Leaves," where authors recited and read, functions which were promptly cut, if the leaves were not.

The book shows that in France the man or woman of letters counts—I mean in the sense of social importance. In England he or she do not, though we may fancy we do. "What's there

in it? What's the good of it all?" These questions were put to me once by a typical business man in Birmingham, to whom with some pride I had shown my latest volume. He seemed to consider me a harmless lunatic to be so employing my time. The Americans hold much the same opinion. "Couldn't a young man like you be doing something very much better?" is what old John Jacob Astor once asked me, when I told him I was going to take to writing for a profession. And when one reflects on the suicide of John Davidson, and on the many distinguished writers whose names have recently been published as future recipients of the grudging State alms of the Civil List, writing certainly does show itself a very poor "proposition." All the more so because, if fortune is almost always refused to our efforts, fame is even more sternly withheld. Most people in this country never look at the name of the author of any book they may read even when they like the book. "I never trouble about the author as long as I get a good 'read,'" is what one so often hears. Many very able writers, who in France would enjoy the public esteem, are totally ignored by the public, though their books may be read. On the other hand those authors who by persistent self-advertising have made their names universally known amongst the English-speaking peoples have the dismal reflection to face that the same talents of publicity applied to some more marketable article of commerce than books would have increased their profits tenfold.

In France the profession of letters is considered an honourable one and can be made the way to

fortune as well as fame. It is only amongst the most ignorant classes that it is not taken seriously. Many worthy French people still understand by the word "*écrivain*," a man who writes letters for the illiterate. I remember once having a conversation with an old woman, who sold flowers at the foot of the statue of Jeanne d'Arc. She asked me what my trade was. "Madame," I said, "je suis écrivain." She shook her head sadly and said : "Mon pauvre garçon. You have come too late. That was so much better a trade under the kings."

She understood that I was a writer of letters—the ulema of the Arabs. Under the Monarchy these *écrivains publiques* used to do good business in the side-line of writing petitions, *placets* and so forth.

I said, "Yes, madame, letters have always prospered better under the kings."

"You have come too late ! You have come too late," she repeated.

"Look you there, madame," I said ; "and I who have been always flattering myself that I have come too early."

CHAPTER II

A King of Lion-tamers—Monsieur Bidel—All my Eye—The Beauty and the Bestiary—Madame and the *Billets-doux*—Bachelors as Family Men—Bidel's Upward Career—A *Déjeuner* at the Villa des Lions—A Female Admirer—Lion-taming and Liquor—An Exciting Adventure—The Secret of Success—Women in the Lion's Cage—Women's Superior Pluck—Wealth and Illiteracy — Horse-dealing in Excelsis — The Mackays in Paris—Albert Wolff and Jacques Rosenthal—Aliens as Patriots—A Fatal *Bon Mot*—A Woman's Revenge —Smollett in Boulogne—Monsieur and "Mons."

APROPOS of kings, there used to stand on the mantelpiece of the study in my boulevard home, amongst other portraits which I designated as the *galerie des rois*, the photograph of a good-looking, dark man, with long hair brushed back from his forehead, the pince-nez of the *intellectuel*, the moustache of a cavalry officer, and, rising from out a turn-down collar, the neck of an athlete. His picture stood next to that of Dostoievsky, my king amongst novelists, who had the face of a Russian peasant, familiar with suffering.

It used to amuse me to ask callers to tell me if they could guess to what profession the gentleman with the long hair belonged. No one ever succeeded. Some would say that from the length of his hair, his turn-down collar, and the double eyeglass, he looked like a literary man, some unappreciated poet, no doubt. Many opined that he was a musician, and said that his face reminded

them of Beethoven, Rubinstein and people of that sort.

I always succeeded in causing some surprise when I told them that the picture was that of Monsieur Bidel, the lion-tamer. Then they said that if they had looked closer at the man's eyes they would have guessed as much. This was not a wise remark, but it was always made. It was not wise because Bidel's eyes were only those of the short-sighted man as they appear through a pair of strong glasses. There was nothing lion-quelling about them, and Bidel himself would have been the first to repudiate the suggestion. I remember his saying to me one day when I was lunching with him at his fine Villa des Lions at Asnières that he considered a man who was then performing at the Folies-Bergères, and who professed to tame lions by the power of fascination of his eye, to be a charlatan of the first water, and he added: "I do not believe in the power of the eye. A blind man could make a good lion-tamer, as good as any other man, if he had the requisite pluck. I myself am very *myope*, and, as you can see, possess no very quelling eyes."

I always considered Monsieur Bidel a very wonderful man. He was, by the way, one of those men whom the adoration of women has not turned into a contemner of the sex. Few men used to be more run after by the Faustines of Paris than this brave compeller of savage brutes. His wife told me many amusing anecdotes in this connection. Madame Bidel was usually seated at the little cash-desk on the platform outside the menagerie tent, and it was to her that the *soubrettes* of the ladies

who had fallen in love with her handsome, brave, dominating husband naturally would hand the *billets-doux* for Monsieur Bidel.

"I always took the letters," she said, "and promised to give them to the 'master,' without letting the messengers know that I was the master's wife. Flowers I also used to accept, but not presents of a more substantial nature. There was one *grande dame* who was perfectly *enragée* to have an appointment with him. She came pestering me day after day in person. 'Oh, but he's splendid,' she used to sigh. At last I lost patience. 'Yes, he's splendid,' I said, 'but he's splendid only for me, madame.' 'His *caissière*!' she cried contemptuously. 'His *caissière*, yes,' I replied. 'His *caissière*, madame, and his wife.' That sent her to cool her ardour somewhere else."

Bidel never let the conduct of these women diminish his respect for the sex. He was a model *père de famille*, and in his private life at the villa in Asnières, acted like the steadiest of bourgeois. He lived, as the French say, *en bon père de famille*. To live "like a good family father" is in the eyes of French landlords the great desideratum in a tenant. I remember once being invited to sign a lease in which amongst other things I bound myself to live like a *bon père de famille*. "But, dear madame," said I to the old lady who was letting me her house, "here is a clause which I cannot honestly subscribe to. I am a bachelor, *tout ce qu'il y a de plus garçon*, and under these circumstances how can I, without infringing the most elementary rules of morality and clean-

living, undertake to be the father of a family in your house ?" The old lady was gifted with a sense of humour. "Monsieur likes his laugh," she said, and explained that the expression was merely a formal phrase, usual in leases.

I remember once at the Neuilly fair passing in front of Monsieur Bidel's menagerie and seeing Madame Bidel in tears at her desk. It occurred to me that perhaps one of her rivals . . . but no, that was impossible. So I asked her what was troubling her, and she said that Bidel had no good common-sense at all, that he had given her his sacred word of honour never to affront an untamed lion again—this was after his terrible adventure with Sultan—that morning, however, a most formidable brute had arrived from Africa, and at the request of a lot of women—only Madame Bidel used another expression—the poor, dear man was at that very moment shut up in the cage with the monster. She, Madame Bidel, knew and felt that he was going to be killed. However, the good lady's gloomy forebodings were fortunately not destined to be fulfilled; her husband lived to master this lion and many others as formidable.

Bidel told me that he had been taming animals ever since he could remember. "I am a child *de la banque*" (a wandering fair-man's child), he said, one day when I was lunching with him at Asnières. "I was born to the business. Papa Bidel kept a show and I began to enter the cages when I was quite a child. I started with wolves, hyenas and other small fry. At fifteen I left my parents and travelled about the country with other shows. In 1859 I was at Bayonne with the Banarbo menagerie.

One day a young royal Bengal tiger got loose. You may imagine the state of the inhabitants. I was sent for. I looked for the beast for some time and found him at last in a blacksmith's shop. I went up to him, caught him by the throat with one hand and with the other threw him on my shoulders and carried him back to his cage. I carried him three hundred yards, with his claws working at my back all the way. I was a good deal damaged that time. However, it was from that day that my career dates. I was then twenty years old. I had faced danger, knew what it was and did not fear it."

"Oh, you dear man!" cried a stout middle-aged lady who was lunching with us, casting a most languishing smile at our host.

"After that," said Monsieur Bidel, continuing his story without heed of the interruption, "I immediately began to tame lions, lionesses, tigers, polar bears, panthers and so on."

Bidel told me that he smokes, but not to excess. He finds that moderate smoking steadies rather than unsteadies his nerves. But he limits himself to twelve cigarettes a day. He also takes one little glass of brandy after his *déjeuner*, but no other alcohol. Apropos of this he said: "Alcohol is the very worst thing a man in my profession can make a bad use of. The beasts seem to know when a man has taken too much. One would fancy that they can discriminate between true courage and that kind of bravado which you call Dutch. All the accidents which you read about in the papers are caused by the drunkenness of lion-tamers, who bring their valour up to sticking-point by excessive

drinking. I take no alcohol at all, except what you just saw me take. If anybody ever offers me a drink, I take a glass of milk, beer very rarely. To master these brutes I have to begin by being completely master of myself."

I asked the lion-tamer what means he employed to subdue his animals.

"My complete self-confidence," he said, "and my courage."

Here the stout middle-aged lady literally writhed on her seat.

Bidel continued: "I consider these the only means. Red-hot irons, arms and loaded whips are the implements of the charlatan, or of the coward. I have never made use of anything more formidable than an ordinary riding-whip. And please, observe, I only work with full-grown animals captured in a wild state, and not, like many of my confrères, with beasts born in the menagerie and brought up by bitches or on a sucking-bottle. When King Edward, with his wife, as Prince and Princess of Wales visited my establishment in 1878, at the time of the Exhibition, I entered the cage in their presence and in the presence of Gambetta, Emile de Girardin and others, and mastered six full-grown African lions which I had received that day and which were as ferocious as any I have ever had to do with. Sultan, too, the lion whose portrait you see over the fireplace, and who nearly killed me some time ago, was six years old—that is to say, in his prime—when I entered his cage for the first time. That was down in Lyons in September 1876. The previous day he had killed a man called Vicard, and my performance was given in

favour of Vicard's widow and orphan. Vicard was a railway porter and had been foolish enough to put his hand into the lion's travelling box at the station—Sultan had just arrived from Africa that morning—to stroke the brute. Sultan seized his arm and tore it off bodily. The poor man died the same night. Well, before twenty-four hours had elapsed I had entirely subjugated this man-killer. I worked regularly with him twice a day for ten years. It was just a year ago that he attacked me and nearly killed me. I was suffering from rheumatic pains that day and happened to slip. A lion-tamer must never fall or he is done for. The brute was on to me like a shot and got me by the neck. I caught him by the throat and shouted: "Sultan! Sultan! what are you doing?" My voice frightened him doubtless, for he opened his jaws and loosened his hold without tearing out the flesh. If he had done that I should inevitably have been killed. He then seized me by the arm, and afterwards by the thigh, wounding me besides in three other places with his claws. I managed, however, in spite of my terrible wounds, to struggle to my feet, and once on my feet was master of him. After that my wife made me promise to enter the cages no more, and I did promise. I had been terribly shaken and reduced in strength. It was a long time before I got back my nerve. Not that I feared Sultan because of his having tasted human blood. It's all nonsense that talk about its being impossible to do anything with animals who have tasted human blood. If it were otherwise, I should have had to retire from business long ago. I have been bitten and torn over and

over again, and have often continued my performance, with my blood streaming all over me. The brutes appreciate my courage——"

"Oh! how well I can understand that!" said the lady.

" . . . and are afraid of me, because they see that I am not afraid of them. That is the whole secret of lion-taming."

Bidel is, or was, a very powerful man. It is recorded of him that in Madrid once he pursued a full-grown lion who had escaped, caught him single-handed and held him until his men brought up the cage, and then threw the brute into it. He admits that he was slightly damaged on that occasion.

Speaking of his strength he related: "At one time one of the great hits of my performance was to pick a full-sized lion up on my shoulders—a lion weighing two hundred kilograms—and to carry him round the cage three times. But Sultan knocked it out of me considerably."

Apropos of the courage of women, he told me that of the amateurs whom he used to take into the cage with him, ladies are always in the majority. He added something which I commend to the notice of the suffragists. "Women," he said, "are much more courageous than men. A woman who has once offered to go into the cage never draws back, while men frequently do. The reason for that is obvious: women take much less alcohol. They certainly—if for that reason only—ought to be granted the suffrage. The first woman who entered the cage with me was Mademoiselle Ghinassi, of the Variétés Theatre. That was in Paris in

1874. All the brutes in my show were collected in that cage. In 1879, Mademoiselle Rousseil, tragic actress, also accompanied me and, surrounded by all my lions, recited "Melpomene." My guests always tremble a good deal outside the door, but once inside the cage they seem to master their emotion. The women always show most pluck."

"Oh, do you think so?" said the lady.

Most lion-tamers are very superstitious, but Monsieur Bidel repudiated any such weakness. He mentioned however that both his wife and his brother-in-law, Alexiano, also a lion-tamer, were very afraid of number thirteen. "My wife," he said, "dreads a Friday, and dreads the 13th of the month. She won't stir out of the house on a 13th, nor will she buy anything on such a date. I, on the contrary, have found Fridays and thirteens, if anything, rather auspicious. I gave my first performance in Paris on a Friday, the 13th of the month, and it was in Paris that I made my great success."

Monsieur Bidel might have furnished Dr Samuel Smiles with a notable example of the virtues which make for worldly success.

"I was very poor and very unhappy as a lad," he said, and alluding to his position when I met him, a very prosperous man, he attributed it all to will power and thrift. It was only by saving every *sou* he earned as a young man that he was able to buy his first beasts and start his own menagerie.

I did not know until I had that conversation with the famous *dompteur* what large expenses are entailed by a menagerie.

"I calculate my expenses in Paris, where we spend the least, at twelve thousand francs a month. In Bordeaux I spent eleven hundred francs a day, and of course when we are travelling in our special train we spend far more. I use one horse a day to feed my animals. We give them beef twice a week. One day in the month they fast. A lion eats twenty pounds of flesh per diem, and drinks two quarts of cow's milk every morning. The Polar bears get fish oil three times a week. Then there is the loss of the beasts to be considered. There is terrible mortality by consumption among lions, and a lion is worth from eight hundred to twelve hundred pounds. The cost price in France of an untamed lion is six hundred pounds. That is what I paid for Sultan, who after I had trained him was worth at least two thousand."

Some time after my last visit to the Villa des Lions, Bidel's daughter was married, and her father, once the poor, wandering lad, was able to give her a dowry of twenty thousand pounds. Like her brother, the young woman had decidedly a leonine cast of features. I was struck with this at first sight of the two Bidel children. It was a further illustration of the physiological fact that women may impress on their offspring the semblance of what most preoccupies their minds during pregnancy.

The Monsieur Alexiano to whom Bidel referred as his brother-in-law was a highly successful and prosperous man in the show business. He informed me at a very early stage of our acquaintanceship that he could neither read nor write, and he added *qu'il n'en avait jamais senti le besoin,*

that he had never seemed to miss the knowledge of either. I have frequently met in life men and women who have done well in the world and who were totally illiterate. One of the leading horse-dealers in Paris when I first went there, a most distinguished-looking man, whom one might have taken for an ambassador, a dignified old gentleman with long white whiskers and a military moustache, told me that he had never had any schooling at all. This had not prevented him from amassing a big fortune in business. He had come to Paris from England as a stable-lad, had found favour in the sight of some lady in whose service he had entered as a young man ; she had first put him in her lap, and next on his feet, and started him in business. He made most of his money in selling high-steppers to the flash women of Paris. "When they get broke," he said, "they sell their horses back to me, and then another cocotte comes and buys them at any price I like to ask, just because her rival had had them. I could show you in the Avenue de l'Impératrice" (he still called the Avenue du Bois by its original name) "a pair of horses which I have sold six times over and on which I have netted a good deal more than thirty thousand francs." He invited me to come to his stables one day to hear an American millionaire bargaining for a pair of ponies. He told me that the American —it was old Mr Mackay—was the most difficult man to trade with that he had ever come across, a man with a rooted objection to what he called "long prices." I did not go to the stables, but I told the dealer that I thought none the worse of Mackay for not letting a horse-dealer get the best of him.

Everybody just at that time was slandering the Mackays, and all kinds of silly stories were circulated about their extravagance. It was said, but it was not true, that they had offered the Municipal Council of Paris a big sum for the use of the Arc de Triomphe on the night of a ball they were giving, as they wished to light it up with Japanese lanterns and use the basement as a palm-garden for their guests. It was also reported that on that occasion the cotillon favours were of pure gold, large medals of pure gold, and that the young aristocrats fought over the basket containing them. All these inventions were put about by newspaper men who had not succeeded in making the Mackays "sing," as the French calls it. "To make a man sing" means, in the French vernacular, to extort money from him by blackmail. It is a cant expression, which has become naturalised in the law courts. *Faire cracher*, or *faire suer quelqu'un*, are synonyms which have not emerged from the depths where slang is the vernacular.

The Mackays' quarrel with Meissonier over a portrait which did not please the lady who sat for it, but for which the painter demanded and obtained three thousand pounds, did much to set the Bohemian clique against these amiable, simple and hospitable people. It was considered a great offence to an Artist (Artist with the biggest of capital A's) that his masterpiece, after the Mackays had been forced to take delivery of it, was hung up in the least public of apartments in the Mackay mansion. I remember a very insolent article which was written on this subject by Albert Wolff of the *Figaro*. He said, amongst other things: "We

have shovelfuls of millionaires in Paris, but only one Meissonier." Albert Wolff was one of the ugliest men I have ever seen, and I remember hearing a lady expostulating most angrily with her husband for showing her the great journalist's portrait. "How can you make me look at a thing like that, when you know my condition. It would serve you right if I were brought to bed long before my time."

Albert Wolff was one of the cleverest of the many clever men who used to write for the *Figaro* in the old days. Like most of the ablest journalists in France, he was a Jew of German extraction. He was born in Cologne in 1835. Yet I never met a man who was more thoroughly Parisianised, a better scholar of French, one more versed in the *finesses* of the language, and, what is less surprising, a more ardent French patriot. There are no better patriots than are the Jews in the country of their election, though alien Christians also make very good citizens. I hear that Major Esterhazy, since he has been residing in England, has become an enthusiastic Great Englander, and that one may hear him saying: "We must have a stronger navy, *que diable.* We cannot allow the Germans to do this or that."

Jacques Rosenthal, who founded that wonderfully clever weekly, *Le Cri de Paris,* and who undoubtedly was the most brilliant Parisian journalist who ever paced the boulevards, was also a Jew of German origin. Yet he showed his Parisian colleagues, first how to be smart as newswriters, and secondly how a big income could be made as a boulevard journalist. At the time of his arrest

Rosenthal was earning three thousand pounds and more per annum. He was accused, with several other people, of having tried to blackmail Lebaudy, *le petit sucrier*, the silly lad who died of consumption at Amélie-les-Bains, and who was the brother of the eccentric Emperor of Sahara. Jacques Rosenthal was acquitted of the charge, but his position was entirely ruined and he never recovered any standing in Paris, dying miserably not very long after the trial. He told me in his last days that he attributed his downfall to having been the author of a stinging epigram directed against a woman who stood high in Lebaudy's favour. He once spoke of this actress as *une petite sœur des riches* (a little sister of the RICH). "For which," he said, "she never forgave me, and it was she who prompted the accusation made against me, which has ruined me." More than Lebaudy lost has been thrown away by a stinging remark made against a powerful woman. One day a French gentleman was crossing the Pont-Neuf just as Madame la Marquise de Pompadour was driving over the bridge in state. "Ah, now I am convinced of the great strength of this wonderful old bridge," said this man. "I have just seen how it has borne the heaviest load in France." No doubt the *bon mot* evoked one or two smiles of appreciation or approval, but the epigrammatist must have bitterly rued this display of his wit. He was never seen or heard of again. Less fortunate than Mattioli, the Man in the Iron Mask, this gentleman disappeared from the face of the earth as completely as if he had fallen from the Pont-Neuf into a bottomless pit. His family never obtained any news whatever

of his fate, though the most searching inquiries were made. When one remembers the doom of Latude, and incidents such as the one described above, one cannot help feeling satisfaction at the thought that before Madame de Pompadour died she had tasted to the full the bitterness of unpopularity without possessing any longer the power to avenge malevolent criticisms. I remember reading a passage in one of the letters which Smollett wrote home from Boulogne during the year which preceded her death. It illustrates how people were talking about her at that time. Smollett had been dining one day with his landlord and one of the guests was one of the *noblesse* of Montreuil, a certain Monsieur L——y, of whom Smollett relates: "He was placed at the head of the table: and indeed he was the oracle and orator of the company: tall, thin, and weather-beaten, not unlike the picture of Don Quixote after he had lost his teeth. He had been *garde du corps* or lifeguardsman at Versailles: and by virtue of this office, he was perfectly well acquainted with the persons of the king and the dauphin, with the characters of the ministers and grandees, and in a word, with all the secrets of state, on which he held forth with equal solemnity and elocution. He exclaimed against the Jesuits, and the farmers of the revenue, who he said, had ruined France. Then addressing himself to me, asked, if the English did not every day drink to the health of *madame la marquise*? I did not at first comprehend his meaning: but answered in general, that the English were not deficient in complaisance for the ladies. 'Ah,' cried he, 'she is the best friend they have in the

world. If it had not been for her, they would not have such reason to boast of the advantages of the war.' "

A similar remark made five years previously would have landed Monsieur L——y in the Bastille, or somewhere worse.

Smollett, by the way, writes of this gentleman as " Mons." L——y. The abbreviation of " Monsieur " into " Mons." was usual in those days. I have seen *lettres de cachet* addressed by the king to the keeper of the Bastille in which the gaoler is addressed as " Mons." So-and-So. This has quite gone out of use in France, and indeed a Frenchman would resent being addressed by letter as " Mons." If any abbreviation be made—which is unusual—the single letter " M." would be used. In England, however, people seem always to advertise French singers and actors as " Mons." So-and-So. It is incorrect, and though this has been pointed out before, it seems firmly rooted in English usage, just as it is to speak of a dressmaker (who would be properly described as a *couturière*) as a *modiste*.

When Lambert d'Etiolles married Mademoiselle Poisson he brought her home to the beautiful house which he had furnished and decorated sumptuously for her reception. It was from this house that at her shameless solicitation Louis XV. sent for her. She left it as Madame d'Etiolles and reached Versailles as Madame de Pompadour. The house was in the rue du Sentier, now a business street, and is still standing. It is *vis-à-vis* to the Paris office of *The Daily Mail*. Now there is curious comparison to be established between Madame de Pompadour and this popular journal.

The Daily Mail

Dear Mr. Sherard,

I regard you principally as about the best authority we have on France, and your books always seem to me to show an intimate real knowledge of our neighbours. I am not at all certain that some of the world's news may not come from that direction presently.

If an opportunity offers, you may rely that I will write to you.

Yours faithfully,

Northcliffe

R. H. Sherard, Esq.

February 17th, 1911.

Letter from Lord Northcliffe to Mr. Sherard dealing with his works on French life.

When *The Daily Mail* was turned into a company the business was capitalised at £1,600,000.

Now 40,000,000 francs or £1,600,000 is the exact sum also at which Madame de Pompadour of the rue du Sentier might have been capitalised. It is the amount which she cost the French nation through the King's *largesses*.

So that a nightly female can do just as well financially as any *Daily Mail*.

CHAPTER III

The Virtuous Indignation of the Riviera — "The Battalions of Africa"—"Biribi"—Conscription *v.* Marriage—Desertion rendered Legal—Position of the Wives of French Conscripts —Some Typical Cases — Wife starving, Husband's Income Halfpenny a Day—Seen through the Barracks' Door—The Penalty of Being Married—Billeted On—My Two Guests— *Toujours* Veal—"*Vive la Classe*"—Songs on the March—The Schoolboy and the Captive—A Mission that failed—The Lean Usher and the Spoils—"Old Gebb is Dead"—Repaying the Debt—The Prodigal Son—Train Eleven

Apropos of the Man in the Iron Mask, a great outcry was made in the summer of last year on the Riviera in general and at Cannes in particular at the proposal of the Minister of War to use the fort on Ile Ste. Marguérite as a depot for one of the disciplinary regiments at present stationed in Africa, one of those *régiments d'Afrique* to which conscripts from the criminal classes, and unmanageable soldiers from other regiments are sent to suffer the severest discipline known in any army in the world. One was rather amused at the virtuous indignation of the Riviera tradesmen when one reflected from what classes a very large percentage of their customers are recruited. I doubt very much whether say fifty per cent. of the people one sees in the gambling-rooms at Monte Carlo are not worse members of society, and a greater danger to it, than the poor, wrong-headed youths who are tortured in "Biribi."

It was in this fortress of Ste. Marguérite, of course, that Mattioli (and since Tighe Hopkins's

book on the subject nobody can have any doubt that Mattioli *was* the Man in the Iron Mask) spent three or four years of his miserable life. His cell is still shown, with the triple row of iron bars set in the casement, which is excavated out of a well many feet thick. There too is the funnel-shaped latrine-opening down which he is said to have thrown the silver plate with its mysterious message scrawled upon it, and there too is the chair on which he is supposed to have sat. Not far off are the rooms occupied during his brief captivity by Marshal Bazaine, and the agreeable fiction of his escape is still kept up by the guardian, who points to the rocks down which he is supposed to have climbed. Everybody knows that Bazaine just walked out of his prison by the front door, but one cannot help thinking that escape being possible by the way indicated it was a great pity that poor Mattioli did not get a chance. No doubt what terrifies the bourgeois of Cannes is the thought that if Bazaine could get away, any one of the disciplinary soldiers might do the same, and that the rich idlers in the hotels would live in constant terror of meeting a *soldat d'Afrique*. Humanitarians approved of the proposed measure, because in France people are very uneasy in their minds from what they have heard of the "system," in "Biribi," and at any rate on the Ile Ste. Marguérite such atrocities as one has read about in novels like "Biribi" would be impossible. But humanitarianism counts for nothing on the Riviera. It is the paradise of the wealthy, and provided a person have money to spend, nobody troubles how it was come by. When Lloyd George was at

Cannes last spring he missed a fine opportunity of addressing a few home truths to the honourable society gathered in the hotels. It would have been a moral tonic to many of us, but that he would have increased his popularity is doubtful in the extreme. But no doubt he confirmed his views on the idle rich by what he observed there, the lounging, the vanity, the constant gorging, the one preoccupation of display, the gambling greed, all the horrors of the "elegant life." I think that the knowledge that on that island just opposite the city of luxury there were a thousand men suffering under rigorous rule for offences far less dangerous than those that were being daily, hourly committed on the mainland might have served as a warning to some of us. And yet I don't know. Some people won't take warning however sharp the lessons. Now on the Riviera such is the life that is led that the doctors and chemists flourish amazingly every winter on the constant indiscretions of the visitors. I used to go downstairs every morning at my hotel rather early, and often saw the chemists' porters delivering the medicines for the guests in the house. Rows of bottles of Hunyadi János and other waters of that description, pills, tonics and so forth came every morning to correct the excesses of the previous days. Certainly the spectacle of the *bataillons d'Afrique* eating their thin soup and their black bread would be less displeasing than that of the men and women radiant in fine attire gorging in the gilded halls of the hotels and restaurants to the sensuous music of exotic bands.

It has always seemed to me that the existence

of these disciplinary regiments is a disgrace to the French army. The theory is that they are maintained so as to enable the authorities to give military training to conscripts who are either undesirable associates for the ordinary soldiers or who have proved themselves utterly unmanageable under ordinary discipline. Lads who have been in prison before they enter the service are usually sent to the African regiments, and there are a great many people in France who think that this is very unfair, who hold that after he becomes a conscript a man ought to be given a fresh chance, and that it is cruel to brand him as a soldier for offences he may have committed in civil life. Many a "rough"—and the experience of the English recruiting sergeants proves this abundantly—becomes an excellent soldier. His vices as a civilian blossom into virtues in the army.

With regard to the "*fortes têtes*" (the obstinately refractory) who are sent to the African regiments by court-martial from other regiments, it is a notorious fact, vouched for by many writers who have detailed their military experiences, that a great proportion of these unfortunate fellows are simply driven there by the animosity of their superiors. Courteline, in his famous books on military life, declares without hesitation that a certain adjutant whom he knew used deliberately to provoke men against whom he had taken a spite, so as to get them to commit some act of indiscipline, which would enable him to bring them before a court-martial and have them sent to break stones on the torrid African highroads. And Courteline is abundantly confirmed by everybody I have

spoken to on the subject. It appears always to be the adjutant—the *chien du quartier,* as the French soldier calls him—who is the main purveyor to "Biribi." He is usually a soured man. He ranks above the non-commissioned officers and cannot associate with them, and on the other hand the superior officers treat him with little respect. And all the hard work and responsibility of the barracks are his.

It is the fear of the adjutant, with "Biribi" in the background, which makes conscription appear such a bogey to French mothers.

Not one of the least advantages which would result from conscription in England would be that, to a very large extent, it would put a stop to those improvident, early marriages amongst the various classes of society who have to work for their living which to-day are the direct cause of so much distress and poverty. Few girls, one may take it, would be foolish enough to marry a lad before he had served his time "under the flag." The prospect of being legally deserted, possibly with a family, when her husband was called to the army, with no means except what her own efforts could provide, would frighten any girl, even the most reckless. It is obvious, of course, that the pay of soldiers in the British conscript army could only be very small indeed, perhaps a little better than the daily half-penny allotted to the French soldier, but in any case not more than a mere trifle.

In France the situation of a woman who has married a lad before he has "done his military service" is wretched in the extreme, unless either of them has means or relations who are prepared

to support the wife (and possibly children) during the husband's two years of absence. A law was passed in 1905 authorising the grant of a daily allowance of sevenpence-halfpenny to the parents of any soldier who had been dependent on him before he was called to the army. This sum is supposed to represent one-half of the daily wage of a French agricultural labourer. Little or nothing was said in that law about relief to the wives and children of conscripts, and indeed is only granted to such wives in exceptional cases. I understand from Monsieur Engerand, the French Deputy, who brought the matter before the French Parliament, that not more than eight per cent. of the wives of conscripts are in receipt of this grant. And the grant is one of sevenpence-halfpenny per diem.

Monsieur Engerand, deputy for the Calvados department, has some pitiful tales to tell of the distress existing amongst the wives and families of men "under the flags." A soldier in the Paris garrison, drawing his halfpenny a day, had to contemplate the misery of his young wife on the verge of being turned out of her home, with two sick children, into the street. Another soldier actually had to see his wife begging in the street with his two children in her arms. One child was two years old, the other was a baby of twelve months. Both were seriously ill with bronchitis. The mother was penniless, without food or shelter. It was midwinter. The soldier had a halfpenny in his pocket. He was not even able to go out and speak to his wife, for that day he was confined to barracks. He contemplated the agony of his dear ones through the sombre framework of the

barracks gate. In another case inquiries into the situation of the wife and children of another soldier, also in garrison in Paris, led to their being found in a cellar lying on a bed made of mere planks, which were mildewed with damp. There was neither food nor fuel in the house.

A young conscript in garrison in a military centre in Normandy had been living, before he was called up to service, with a woman by whom he had had two children. He had honourably married her before leaving for the army just after the birth of a third child. He brought his wife and children up to the barracks with him. The first night the woman and her babies were allowed to sleep there, thanks to the humanity of one of the officers. The next day, while the father was forced to remain, the mother and children were turned into the street. The woman was penniless, the children were without food. The father could not even share with them his meagre pittance of bread and soup. A gendarme, finding the wretched family in the street, took them to the hospital. The hospital authorities refused to receive them. They were turned out into the street again. If the father had not done the right thing and married the mother, she could have been helped from municipal funds which relieve unmarried women with illegitimate children. But she was an honourable woman and there was no relief for her. She took to the streets and begged.

In England, I suppose, all these poor women and children would have gone to the workhouse. Will there be workhouses enough in England to shelter, or poor-rates heavy enough to maintain, all the destitute families of men serving in the conscription

army, unless, when conscription does come in, poor men are manly enough and poor women sufficiently prudent not to marry with the separation which the military law will enforce awaiting them at no distant date.

It is rather curious that while in England the idea of conscription is gradually growing more popular, the anti-militarist spirit is spreading more and more in France. I can frankly say that I have never yet met a French soldier who did not speak with dislike of his "dog of a trade." Writers, like George Courteline, Descaves and others, who have served their time, have all abused the life of a French soldier in terms and with an energy which have no doubt contributed to the anti-military spirit.

The French soldier, like the prisoner, counts the days that he has yet to serve. "Only one thousand and ninety-four days more to serve, *nom de Dieu*," used to be a favourite witticism amongst recruits in the days of three years' service, on the morrow after their admission to barracks. *La classe, La classe* is their constant invocation. "*Vive la classe*" is their favourite cry. By extension this means the day on which "la classe"—the contingent of recruits for such and such a year—will be liberated.

Two soldiers were once billeted upon me in a little house in Vernon in Normandy where I was living, and where I spent the most peaceful years of my life. Manœuvres were in progress and a very large number of men were lodged in that little town of which it will be remembered Victor Hugo speaks as the home of the Baron de Pontmercy, the father of Marius, the ineffable prig-hero of "Les

Misérables." Every householder is obliged in France to receive soldiers who are billeted upon him, unless he obtain a dispensation from the municipal authorities by an annual payment of two pounds. I received the quartermaster's preliminary visit and declared myself very ready to do my best for the *braves garçons* whom he was going to send me. He said that if everybody was as amiable as I, the business of *fourrier* would not be such "a pig's life." He then scrawled a large " 2 " in chalk on my gate and added a mysterious hieroglyphic, something like those signs which gipsies and beggars make use of. I asked him what it meant, and he answered with a wink : " That is to remind me to send friends here. When we find a good house, we send our pals to it."

The law obliges a household to supply soldiers billeted upon it with shelter, straw, fire, light and water. One is not obliged to feed them. However, soldiers are popular in France and the fullest hospitality is rarely refused. The extent of that hospitality of course must depend on the means of the householder. Some of the soldiers who came to Vernon that day would be regaled on dog-fish, but in many houses a fat rabbit would be taken out of the hutch and *sauté*-ed with little onions for the guests.

When my two men arrived—and goodness gracious the state they were in !—I asked them what I could order for their dinner. They said that, if I wanted to give them a treat, " let it be veal." They added that they were sick of beef and mutton, which they got as rations, and that during manœuvres they had consumed enough tame

rabbits to stock a warren. So it would be good of me to let it be veal. Veal it was, *toujours*. For each time during the two days they stayed in my house that I asked them what they would like for their next meal, they answered: "*Du veau*, monsieur, if you please." It is the ideal of the French proletarian to reach a social position which shall enable him to eat veal every day.

My men arrived clotted with mud, their faces and hair covered with dust, extenuated, exhausted, dying of hunger, thirst and fatigue. Their aspect immediately prompted me to treat them as well as possibly I could, and the reason for this, the special reason, I will narrate further on. I must have satisfied them, for at reveille on the third morning, when they came to say good-bye to me, waking me for the purpose at three A.M., they told me that I had treated them very well indeed, upon which I said that if they had been satisfied I hoped they would recommend my house to their friends and acquaintances. I gave them a good bed with clean sheets and thick woollen mattresses to lie on. I supplied them with tobacco and cigars, and my housekeeper, Madame Gloux, exerted her culinary talents to the utmost on their behalf. The reputation of my hospitality spread in camp, and on the evening of the second day the *fourrier* with another friend invited himself to dinner and they all declared that they would not mind staying at the little house in the rue Grévarin until the blessed day of *la classe*. They were rather diffident about conversing with me, because, being an Englishman, it was probable—was it not? —that I might endeavour to wheedle from them

important military secrets which would be of the greatest use to Lord Joseph Chamberlain in his next war. But towards the end they grew more talkative and told me of their hopes and prospects after *la classe*. One of the men declared that his ambition was to become a detective—I liked him little for it and did not offer him a second glass of cognac that night—the other hoped to set up as a pork-butcher in his little town in Beauce. They made themselves useful too, helped to clean the house, drew water, cut firewood and ran errands.

One objection I had to them was that every morning at a very early hour I was awakened by their exclamations as they sprang from their beds. Their bedroom adjoined mine, so that I could not help hearing them. One would shout : "*Encore vingt jours seulement à tirer, nom de Dieu!*" (Only twenty more days to do, thank Heaven!) The other was less exultant, because his time was longer. But with enthusiasm they shouted in chorus : "*Vive la classe! La cla-a-a-se!*" I used to turn over in bed and wonder how many more days I had to *tirer* in the more strenuous and less happy service of life against adversity.

After dinner, when they had drunk their fill of ruby Burgundy or golden Norman cider, and the little glasses of cognac or of Calvados had made them merry and obscene, they would shout the marching songs of the French army, which for the most part are not for ears polite. The choral invocation of Priapus, or at least of Venus Meretrix, seems to be the favourite stimulus which the French soldier gives to his energies, and during night-marches peaceful bourgeois and peasants sleeping

side by side with their wives in the little towns or villages through which the soldiers pass are often roused from their slumbers by rhymes which are worse than ribald, and reminded, painfully, no doubt, in the placid backwaters of their middle-age, of the storms and riots of their youth.

The reason why I have always tried to be kind to French soldiers in distress dates back from the days when I was a little wanton boy at school in Wiesbaden. It was just at the time of the return of the German leaders followed by their victorious cohorts and leading with them prisoners, not yet exchanged. Wiesbaden was gaily decorated; there were triumphal arches everywhere and in one of the inscriptions which I remember there was a rhyme—derisive of the defeated enemy—between "Franzosen" (Frenchmen) and "ohne Hosen" (trouserless, *sans culottes*).

I was watching the triumph pass and saw all the great men whose names are history, William the Emperor-King, von Moltke, Bismarck, Prince Friederich Wilhelm, von der Tann, all the mighty lords of war. Then came the German troops, and then, to adorn the pageant, a miserable array of French prisoners on their road to the sinister cantonments of Coblentz. The poor fellows presented a most pitiful appearance. Ragged, forlorn, blood-stained, covered with dust, unkempt, unwashed, splashed with all the ordures of defeat, they staggered along, a rabble rout under the ungenerous eyes of the German mob, under the unchivalrous rhymes of the triumphal arches.

My feeling was all for these poor fellows, from that stupid, unpractical feeling of perpetual

sympathy with the losing side which is the characteristic of the deservedly unsuccessful, and when one of the prisoners motioned to me to come along at his side, and in a voice choked with dust and in words which a tongue shrivelled with thirst could hardly articulate, asked me if I could speak French, and that being so, whether I would render a "poor devil" who was dying of fatigue—*rien mangé, rien, soif, soif, malade, crevé*—a service, for the love of the good God and the Holy Virgin, I was enthusiastic in my response.

He put a gold louis into my hand and bade me run and get him something to eat, and something to drink—especially something to drink—"*surtout à boire.*" There was an inn, a Wirthshaus, hard by, and I hurried thither and purchased some sausage, some cheese, some bread, and a large bottle of beer. But the trouble was about the louis. The woman had never seen such a coin, and before her husband came along and said that he wished he had his pig's trough full of such money, and so I got my change, some two or three precious minutes had passed. And when I got out again, the troops still passing by, the convoy of prisoners was far ahead. I ran as fast as I could, dodging through the crowd, a little anxious boy, frantic with fear lest I might not reach my man. BUT I NEVER FOUND HIM.

I reached some French captives, but whether these were not the first detachment which had passed me, or whether I could not recognise my prisoner, or whether he did not dare accost me again, being under supervision of some bulldog-faced Bavarian sergeant, I do not know. I ran

panting along the line, scanning every pain-drawn, agonising face. Then I ran on again and back, hustled by the crowd, like a dog who has lost its master. BUT I NEVER FOUND HIM.

At last I had to return to my school, and once there I went straight to the usher—a wretched old man called Gebb—and told him what had happened, and begged him to take the things and the money to the barracks and find the prisoner and save me from the horrible suspicion that I had robbed a poor man in such distress. Old Gebb took the goods and the money and said that that would be all right, or that he would make it all right for me, and went off with the parcel under his arm, chinking the guldens and the groschens in his grimy, hunger-withered hand.

And though partially reassured by his words, I do not think that any fraudulent bailee, tossing on the pallet of his prison cell, ever had such qualms of conscience, such stings of remorse, as were mine that night. The poor, hungry Frenchman, what must he think of me ?

When I met our lean usher the next day he told me that he had been to the barracks and had made every inquiry, but without success. " Possibly," he said, " the man did not dare to declare himself. Such an action may be straflich [punishable], very straflich." I did not ask him what he had done with the Frenchman's goods and money. I felt no ownership in them. I was glad not to see them again.

And knowing the kindly disposition of the French I feel sure that that poor prisoner, who for all I know may have fallen under disciplinary bullets

in a grave dug for himself with his own hands in the yard of the Coblentz cantonments, would not have regretted his louis d'or so very much if he could have seen how lean was the man into whose fingers it had come at last, how lean, and with what hunger-fever in his eyes.

I often think of that wan usher as the most unhappy of men, as the prototype of famishing misery. That school at Wiesbaden was a kind of German Dotheboys Hall, to which I had been sent at the age of nine by a mistake on my father's part. We boys were always famishing and I can now understand how very hungry the usher must have been. But even then I felt very sorry for him and understood to some extent the agony of a position which, later in life, was to be analysed for me in all its squalid and painful details of suffering by Alphonse Daudet, once *pion* at Alais.

After leaving Wiesbaden for another school at Dresden, I was often haunted by the remembrance of the poor fellow, and once writing to a schoolfellow who had remained behind I asked for news of him. To his answer to my letter the boy added a postscript—an afterthought. "Old Gebb is dead. He *was* a silly fool." That was all. Old Gebb was dead. He *was* a silly fool. All his comings and goings and the things he had tried and those that he had achieved, and his ambitions and his hopes, and his pride and pleasure in himself, all the rewards he had had, all the kindnesses he had done, and the friendships and the actions and his laughter and tears . . . that is how it all ended and that was his epitaph voiced by an elfin child. Old Gebb is dead. He *was* a silly fool.

But do epitaphs matter ? Still it seemed to me hard that, even after his death, contempt for the poor fellow survived. *Post funera* . . .

I remember a woman once saying to a friend of mine at a time when she loved him, that if he died she would engrave on his tomb : " Here lies a human heart." She admired him then and thought him good and kind. The next I heard was that she had broken his heart . . . perhaps for the epitaph's sake.

The first occasion on which it was in my power to befriend a poor French soldier was many years later, as I returned from Naples to Marseilles by steamer. There was a family of Italian models forward, the family of little Pietro Fosca, whose picture as a Calabrian shepherd-boy, with the sheepskin over his shoulder and the pointed hat, is famous the world over. I often used to go and talk to this family. They proposed to proceed to Paris from Marseilles on foot.

There in the steerage I made the acquaintance of a Frenchman who had just returned from Batavia, where he had been serving the Dutch in their wars against the Malays. He was interesting about his campaigns, and the treachery of the Malays, and told me how poisonous snakes were often placed by them in the beds of Europeans. He had been a wild lad, he said, and had had to leave France and had got to Holland, where for the recruiting bribe of two hundred guilders and a thousand Batavian cigars he had enlisted in that Dutch foreign legion from which a man rarely returns. He was returning, however, having miraculously escaped a thousand dangers, with the rank

of sergeant and a decoration won in storming some Malay encampment. Later on he said to me that he hoped that the sight of his decoration would please his people and that the escapades of long ago would be forgiven. I was saying good-bye to him on the quay at Marseilles when he suddenly caught me by the arm, and speaking with terrible earnestness, said: "Look here, we have been comrades together. I am in a terrible position. I have not a penny in the world, and I do not know if my father or any of my relations are living, for I have never written home since I ran away years and years ago. Will you at least help me to telegraph home?"

We went to the post-office together and he sent off a telegram without knowing whether it could be delivered. I had told him to ask for the reply to be telegraphed to a certain café of which I knew. I took him there and we lunched together. The poor fellow could hardly swallow a mouthful. His agitation was painful to witness. It was not anxiety at the position in which he must find himself if no answer returned; it was dread lest returning too late his appeal for forgiveness might have been sent to eyes that could not see.

A long afternoon passed and then the answer came. "Open it for me, my friend," he said; "I dare not. I cannot."

"It's all right," I said, after I had glanced at the blue paper:

"Come back to us, dear son. We expect you with open arms. Money for you to the post-office."

He had not returned too late.

I had been speculating how much it would cost me to get him home in the event of his receiving an answer but no remittance, and I was much relieved to find that no call would be made on my slender resources. I confess that I had been wondering—though the poor fellow had said nothing about wanting travelling expenses or so much as hinted at "a trifling loan"—why on earth a strong, big fellow like that couldn't walk from Marseilles to his home, when a child like little Pietro Fosca cheerfully contemplated the much longer tramp to Paris. My egotism had not allowed me to reflect that with his tricks, buffooneries, antics, canzonetti and tarantellas little Pietro had the wherewithal to earn his living on the way, whereas my friend.... However, it was all right.

The soldier was profuse in his gratitude for the very trifling services I had rendered him. And the fact is that a trifling service is often an immense service. I remember how a comp. on *The Western Morning News*, with whom I spent some hours on Plymouth Hoe one night when I was homeless and he was passing time before the first boat to the place where he lived, practically saved my life by lending me threepence, which was all he possessed.

"If they hadn't sent the money," said the soldier, "I should have taken train eleven." This is French for "Shanks's Mare." The 11 represents the two legs of the pedestrian.

In the upper classes pedestrianism as a mode of travelling is never thought of. It is a startling reflection how many thousands of people in England alone never dream of any other way of getting from one place to another.

I was talking a few days ago with a wretched man who was selling bootlaces outside the Crystal Palace, and who told me he came from Sheffield and that he had friends there, and that it was ever so much more pleasant a place than Norwood to get a living in. I asked him why he did not return to Sheffield, and he answered quite simply that it was too long a walk in the weather we were 'aving.

In the quest of realism it is not always squalor that one finds. Now and again a touch of nature, like this man's simple remark, opens out wide and fruitful fields of thought. Before I had reached home I had followed many a pilgrim over many a weary mile, through devious ways to many an unknown bourne.

CHAPTER IV

The Quest of Realism—Zola's Deputy—Gautier and the Salon—The Critic by Intuition—Condemned to Obscurity—A Handsome "Oil"—Munkacsy and the Sweeper—Brozik and the Drake—Rosa Bonheur and Realism—A Galahad of the Slaughter-house—De Lesseps on Bonheur—Le Grand Français and La Grande Française—Documentation of "L'Assommoir"—Dowson, Coupeau and Myself—On Drinking in the Army—Ocular Demonstrations—Three-bottle Men and Alcoholism—Mr Curwen of Workington—Visit to a Country House—The Influence of Women—William Wordsworth, a Three-glass Man—"The Gent with Business on Both Sides of the Road"—"We are Seven"—The Rhyme to "Limb"

THE quest of realism, of the human or other documents, will take artists to great lengths. Zola, by the way, being of a stay-at-home disposition, carried out most of his more repulsive investigations by deputy. It was, for instance, the faithful Céard, at that time librarian at the Musée Carnavalet, who was commissioned by the author of "Nana" to visit a Paris hospital and to study the appearance of a woman dying of smallpox. His instructions were most precise, and all kinds of horrible particulars were to be noted.[1] Zola wished to use these descriptions

[1] Here is an extract from a letter written by Zola to Céard on 18th December 1879: " . . . I have received your book on smallpox. Evidently that will be enough for my purpose. I will invent the death-mask by a comparison of the various documents: I am very much tempted to make it black smallpox, which in point of horror is the most original. Only I will confess that if you could manage to see the corpse of a person who died of this disease—I say, here is a nice little job for you—you would oblige me greatly: But you must not take too much trouble about it. In that way

for the death of Nana. Sarah Bernhardt is reported to have documented herself for the "Dame aux Camélias" at a consumption hospital.

There is, of course, often a certain amount of "fake" in these alleged investigations *pour l'amour de l'art.* People, and not writers alone, are very fond of describing terrible experiences through which they have passed. I do not know how many men I have met who informed me with much pride, how, being stranded in America, they worked their way home to England on cattle-boats. Many realistic novels which are supposed to be based on the personal observations of their authors proceed from reading and the imagination alone. Not a few journalists are aware of the fact that a certain knowledge of the subject combined with imagination furnishes a much better descriptive result than sheer accuracy. Theophile Gautier used to write criticisms of the Salon, the French Picture Show, from his head, without ever troubling to visit the exhibition. If you gave him the subject of the picture and the name of the artist he could turn out a most apt critique of the work, the colouring, and so on. All artists have their little peculiarities, their mannerisms, their predilections, and once the critic is familiar with these nothing but honesty need compel him to go and look at the pictures. Who, for instance—in the days when Henner was alive—hearing that a

I should not have to invent anything—I should have my death-mask. Be sure to dwell at length on the state of the eyes, of the nose, and of the mouth, to give me a precise and geographical chart, in which, of course, I should only take what I require. . . . And remember that I don't want you to take too much trouble about the matter. If the worst comes to the worst I can manage with what I have.[12]

"Femme Couchée" by him was on show at the Academy, would have needed to go to Burlington House in order to describe it. The mere name of the picture by that artist evokes the pose, the old-ivory-whites, the Venetian reds and the charcoal blacks of the colouring. And the same with Bougereau, with his chocolate-coloured males and his pink women. I knew an English journalist in Paris who for several years, imitating Gautier, "did" the Salon without ever going to the Champs-Elysées. He procured an illustrated catalogue on Varnishing Day, and his knowledge of the peculiarities of the various artists helped him in his very successful deception.

What contributed to the possibility of doing this is the mournful fact that art-critics are not encouraged by editors to notice unknown men or women. "We don't want to hear about nobodies," said a great American editor to me one day in eliding certain paragraphs in a Salon article in which I had called attention to some very good work by people who were not famous. I suggested that even Raphael was a nobody at one time in his career and that everybody must get a start, and he retorted that his paper was a "business proposition" and did not do a cent's worth of gratuitous advertising. It was accordingly a pathetic experience of mine when I used to attend the Salon to have to refuse invitations from unknown artists, who accosted me there, begging me to come and look at their works. I was always forced to tell them that it would serve no purpose, and that I had only been sent there to write about the exhibits of the bonzes or high-priests.

I remember once the despairing remark with which a grey-haired painter commented on my refusal. "It's thirty years that I have been trying to get myself known." The only comfort I could give him was to say, pointing to a picture of one of the bonzes, a most successful mediocrity, "Well, it will take *him* very much less than that to get himself forgotten."

Apropos of artists it is as true in France as in England that that which is called "the artistic temperament" is often wanting in men and women whose works are exquisite in art. One finds the veriest bourgeois amongst the creators of artistic masterpieces, men without refinement, with base and mean ideals, imbued in everything but their work with vulgarity. I once was asked by one of the painters whose work, from the point of view of poetry and imagination, I admired most amongst English artists, whether I had seen his "oil" at the Academy. It only dawned on me later that he meant his oil-painting. I afterwards found that in a large section of English-speaking peoples a picture painted in oil-colours is invariably described as an "oil." These people would, I suppose, speak of Raphael's Madonna at Rome as "a handsome oil."

The vulgar in England have, by the way, a mania for abbreviating and elongating words which should not be abbreviated nor elongated. With them a pine-apple is a pine, a greengage is a gage, but port and sherry are port wine and sherry wine.

During my sojourn on the Paris boulevards I was careful rarely to call on my artist friends in

their studios. I did not like to have my illusions dispelled. To see a picture in the painting is like watching a woman "making-up" at her toilet-table. The fake in either case is painful to appreciate. All those accessories, those properties! But the models! I never see reproductions of Munkacsy's fine "Christ before Pilate" without remembering that the model for the painter's central figure was the disreputable person who used to sweep out Julien's Academy in the faubourg St Denis. Wenzel von Brozik I once discovered in his studio painting the variegated splendours of an imperial Byzantine mantle from the breast of a drake. The drake had been dead some time and the studio smelled very bad indeed. Some of the most loathsome women in Paris have served as models for saints, virgins and martyrs. It is as well not to look behind the scenes, and this is as true about writers as it is about painters.

I think that the most interesting case of an artist being impelled, from sheer love of accuracy, to undertake the most repulsive investigations is that of Rosa Bonheur, who in 1837, at a time when she was only fifteen years of age, was a constant visitor to the Paris slaughter-houses. The child did not allow her feelings to stand in the way of her studies. Already at that age animal life was what interested her most.

"It used to fill me with horror," she once told me, "for I was then as now a great lover of animals . . . and oh! the horrible things I had to witness. But," she added, "perhaps what disgusted me most was the sight of anæmic men and women, and even children, who used to come to the

abattoirs to drink the warm blood from the dying animals. I don't know if that goes on still, but in those days doctors were very fond of prescribing this cure for bloodlessness, chlorosis and debility. There was something almost cannibalistic in the way these pale phantoms would snatch the reeking, smoking tumblers from the blood-stained butchers and gulp the contents down.

"I used to spend whole summer-days," she continued, "in some fetid corner of the abattoir, returning day after day until my work was finished. At first these visits were a terrible trial to me. I was constantly exposed to the coarse jests and even the insults of the butchers. Many of them seemed to delight in exposing all the horrors of their trade before my eyes, eyes which my intense desire to observe, to learn prevented me from closing. But I don't know whether I should have been able to carry out to the end my studies amongst these coarse and brutal men, had I not found a champion, a defender. This was a great, big fellow called Eugene Gravelle, whose work at the abattoir was the scalding of calves' heads. He told me he liked me because I was a well-plucked young 'un, and he would not allow anyone to interfere with me or annoy me. Many and many a time did Eugene Gravelle, on my behalf and in my defence, a Galahad scalder of calves' heads, throw off his apron and tuck up his sleeves and fight his companions."

My old friend, Ferdinand de Lesseps, was to the very last one of Rosa Bonheur's most faithful admirers.

I remember a conversation about her which we

had one day — I think it was in 1886 — as we were walking from the offices of the Suez Canal to his house in the Avenue Montaigne.

"I have known Rosa for nearly fifty years," he told me, "and my opinion of her genius has never wavered. I remember saying to Pereire, who used to come to our meetings in the Passage Choiseul, that Bonheur's little girl would live to be one of the glories of France."

"La grande Française," I said, with a little flattery to le grand Français.

"That she certainly is," said Monsieur de Lesseps, "and I can't understand why the French allow you English to take all her masterpieces out of this country. They will regret it some day. But then you English, and your cousins, the Americans, strip France of everything that is good here. You take all our champagne, you take our best cognac, you take all our best *chefs*, and you cannot even leave us our *chef-d'œuvres*, our pictures. I told the Prince so the other day when I was dining with him at Marlborough House."

"Still," I said, "the French have been able to keep what many people think Rosa Bonheur's best picture, 'Le Labourage Nivernais,' which is at the Luxembourg."

"Yes, fortunately," cried the old gentleman. "Oh! le chef-d'œuvre. Do you know the story connected with that painting? When poor Bonheur was dying—it was in March 1849—he asked that this picture, which was the last that his darling Rosa had painted, should be brought to his bedside, and when it had been placed there he seemed to revive. A smile came on his face, he

clasped his daughter in his arms, and so passed away in a transport of paternal pride and artistic joy. What a happy remembrance for dear Rosa that by her art she was able to gladden the last moments of her father, the father to whom she was so passionately attached."

Rosa Bonheur's will cuased a lot of ill-feeling and much ill-natured comment in France. For my part I was delighted that her fortune went to Miss Klumpke, the American lady-artist, for whose work, and character, and devotion to Rosa I had the greatest admiration.

The picture of Rosa Bonheur standing horror-stricken but intent in the Paris slaughter-houses is much less painful to consider than that of Emile Zola in the cheesemonger's shop connoting with wide-open and quivering nostrils each separate stench from the varieties of cheese, a study which affords so disgusting a page in his novel, "Le Ventre de Paris." Rosa's quest at least gave us "Le Labourage Nivernais" and "Les Charbonniers."

I have spoken above of Zola as a man of a stay-at-home disposition. He described himself as such in his preface to "L'Assommoir." He was, however, always very angry when people who didn't like him—and there were some such people—wrote of him as a *pantouflard* (a man who is fond of keeping his slippers on). For that is exactly what Emile Zola was not. He once told me that he never felt really himself until he had drawn on his boots in the morning.

Apropos of "L'Assommoir," which is a book that stands being read over again at least once a year,

it is a living example of that infinite capacity for taking pains which is the synonym for genius. An extraordinary amount of work preceded the writing of it. Amongst the notes made for this book is a most elaborate one headed "*Alcoolisme,*" in which Zola, or perhaps the good Céard, studied in detail the progress of the drink-ravage in Coupeau, from the merriment of the early stages—*ivresse d'abord gaie*—down to the sombre finale. Some of the details noted down were not made use of in the book, and medical terms, with which this paper abounds, were very wisely discarded. It is a terrible document, and so good an illustration of the way in which Zola prepared for his work, that I think a few quotations from it may be found interesting. Zola comes to the end of the drink-ravage in Coupeau:

"At last, the serious illness, the important part which precedes death. Put this scene at night, the attack coming on after excessive drinking. The whole delirium tremens business.

"The eyes bloodshot, perspiration, the features distorted. Forty degrees of fever. Ataxic movements, very serious. The face and whole body are trembling. This is accompanied by convulsive starts, muscular tremblings and undulations, even during sleep. If the hand be laid on the spine, there are cries of pain. . . . Four days of cries and trembling. The strait-waistcoat, etc. Padded cell; on the floor a double layer of mattresses. Paint the picture, first of all buzzing noises, singings and hissings in the ears, confused songs, ringing bells, tumultuous cries. The sight is dim, fails, visions in a cloud. Sparks, flames, shadows, animals, demons which grow bigger and smaller in turns, changing colour each time. . . . Everything he tastes, tastes of rats, of sulphur. His food seems to him to be filled with vitriol, his herb-tea tastes of wine or brandy. Mad, agitated, calling, shouting, howling, perspiring; he fancies he is covered with vermin, living things between his flesh and his skin, worms crawling over him which he tries

to shake off. He also fancies that he is entangled in coils of wire and tries to free himself; he feels a damp cold thing crawling up his thighs. . . . The trembling at last affects the whole body. The neck grows still, the face grimaces . . . conjugate deviation of the eyes to the right; a little foam on the lips. . . . Describe Coupeau dead being looked at by Gervaise."

When I read "L'Assommoir" and come to the part in the first few pages where Coupeau is introduced I never fail to recall the pain-drawn, haggard face of poor Ernest Dowson. We had been to the "gingerbread fair" at the Barrière du Trône together one day, and after walking round the shows had entered a *marchand de vins*. While we were drinking our vermouth, there came into the ken a couple a workmen, who sat down at a table near ours and called for glasses of "schnick" (the coarse brandy of the wineshops). One of these workmen was a ragged, dirty, drunken-looking man; the other was a fresh young fellow, clear of eye and complexion, whose blue blouse was scrupulously clean and whose whole appearance was in strong contrast to that of his disreputable boon-companion.

Dowson's eyes and mine met, and absolutely in the same moment we exclaimed, "Coupeau." And no doubt here was the commencement of a career such as that connoted by Zola for his book. Let us hope it did not continue. Certainly a workman has nowadays a better chance of escaping the drink-curse than he had at the time with which Zola deals. The temperance movement has greatly extended in France during the last twenty years, and no little credit in this matter is due to the action of the military authorities, who discourage

drinking to the utmost of their power. No spirits can now be purchased at the regimental canteens, and the quantity of wine or beer which may be sold to one soldier on any one day is strictly limited. Formerly a soldier could drink himself drunk on absinthe or "schnick"—of course at considerable risk to himself—within the barrack-walls. The picturesque *cantinière*, who with her little keg of spirits slung over her shoulders was, for all the charm of her appearance, a greater danger perhaps to the soldiers than the enemy, was done away with long ago. But a most effective temperance lesson was read to the men in barracks by means of posters hung in all the rooms. These gave in colours the picture of what a drunkard's vital organs—liver, kidneys, lungs, heart, etc.—look like, and in contrast to these was depicted a healthy man's inside. Besides this there was some effective letterpress describing the poisonous effects of spirits. At the same time these posters would not have pleased our English teetotalers, because while condemning spirits as deadly poisons, the text described wine and beer as healthy drinks. Now this is a statement with which few people who preach temperance will agree.

There was never more drunkenness in England than when little else but wine was drunk. The three-bottle men never touched spirits, but they got horribly intoxicated all the same. Of course the man who drinks, say, a bottle of ordinary claret, is swallowing the fourth part of a pint of pure alcohol, admitting the claret to contain twelve and a half per cent., as many clarets do. The alcohol is much diluted, but it is there all the same. The

three-bottle man, with port at twenty per cent., put himself outside a pint and a tenth of pure spirits. That is why so many doctors who oppose the use of alcohol forbid even the use of wine or beer.

Apropos of the days of wine-drinking in England, my uncle, Mr William Wordsworth of Capri, was telling me the other day of stories told him by his grandfather, Mr Curwen of Workington, who at the beginning of last century was a boy at Eton. He was once with his father at a big country house at which some of the greatest noblemen of the day were staying. On the first night, going to the dining-room after dinner to say good-night to his father, he met Mr Curwen coming out of the room. All the other guests as well as their host were lying insensible on the floor, all dead drunk.

The restraining influence of women . . .

By the way I wonder what is the proportion between the men who are restrained from drink by women and those who are goaded, urged, gadfly-driven to it by them ?

As I was saying, the restraining influence of women, even in those bibulous days, made itself felt, and, in consequence, it was by no means the rule for all gentlemen to be found dead drunk after dinner every night.

Apropos of this I remember being told by my mother that at Rydal Mount, when her grandfather Wordsworth was dining with his wife, and, port and sherry being on the table, might happen to put out his hand towards one or other of the decanters, the old lady, if he had had the amount she allowed him, would say : "No, no, William ; no more. You have had your three glasses, you know."

JOHN CHRISTIAN CURWEN, Esq., M.P.,
High Sheriff of Cumberland.

Then she would rise from the table and, taking a decanter in each hand, cross to the sideboard and lock them up. And the poet never said a word.

But when Hartley Coleridge—poor Hartley, who from his staggering gait homewards was known in Rydal as the "gentleman with business on both sides of the road"—when Hartley came in while dinner was proceeding, grandmamma Wordsworth would lock the decanters up, whether her husband had had his three glasses of port and sherry or not.

She seems to have been an austere woman—great-grandmamma—and my mother and uncles as children were often soundly rated by her. And it was on these occasions only that the poet opposed her. "Nay, Mary," he used to say, "let them be. They are but young."

Apropos of children, my mother remembers that when "We are Seven" first appeared the opening line ran :

"A simple child, dear brother Jim."

One day as she was walking out with her grandfather she said to him : "Those horrid papers are saying that you only put in 'dear brother Jim' so as to have something to rhyme with 'in every limb.'"

"Why, of course that was the reason, my dear," said the old gentleman.

CHAPTER V

The Great at Table—Ibsen and the Tourist—Zola as a Gourmet—"The Vacant Chair"—Victor Hugo and the Birds—Victor Hugo as a Collector of Circulars—His Universal Knowledge—The Mangle and Myself—"What's all this Noise About?"—Former Publishers and Publishers of To-day—Marguérite Audoux, Mirbeau and "Marie Claire"—Translators in Paris, and in London—Daudet and the Typewriter—Petitions and Petitioners—MacMahon and the Negro—French Presidents and the Death Penalty—Carnot and the Dossier—By leaving a Window Open—A Curious Verdict—One Taken, the Other Left

It is always interesting to observe the great at table, because here the mind is not in evidence, but the physical animal man. I often think of Henrik Ibsen seated in the little inner drawing-room at the Grand Hotel Christiania with a large glass of brandy and a glass of water before him, from which he took alternate sips. Where he sat he was framed, as it were, in the *portières* which draped the archway communicating between the two rooms, and did not exactly—unless one knew who he was—present the most pleasing of pictures. I remember once being asked by an excited American globe-trotter to point out Ibsen to him.

"I know he's in the hotel," he said, "and I want to see him, because then I'll be through with Norway and can move on to Sweden."

I said that if he would turn round he would see the great man, who was sitting as I have described, framed in the *portières* of the archway just behind him.

The American turned and treated the master to a long stare. Ibsen was so accustomed to being stared at—I believe that he rather liked it—that he did not pay the faintest attention, but sat there sipping alternate sips of water and brandy, a philosopher taking his ease in his own inn.

"*That*, Ibsen!" cried the American, turning away. "Well, I guess I'm through with Norway now."

And he rushed off to catch his train to Gothenburg.

Zola was pleasant to behold at table, because there, at least, he lost that worried, careworn look which at other times lay upon his face. He used to enjoy his meals thoroughly, and was a true gourmet, after the style of Brillat-Savarin. His readers will have noticed what delicious menus he describes in his books. When he sat down to table a smile of contentment effaced the wrinkles of his mouth. "Ah, here is something worth while, something worth attending to," he would say, and tuck his napkin into his waistcoat. He once entertained some friends, including Sir Campbell Clarke and Lady Clarke (both since dead, like their host), to a *déjeuner* at the Savoy Hotel, and I remember it as one of the best luncheons to which I have ever sat down. There was a vacant chair at the table, the place reserved for George Moore, who had been invited, but who declined to lunch at the table of a man with whose literary principles he was no longer in sympathy.

By the way, I never understood where is the pathos in a popular print entitled "The Vacant Chair." Every chair is vacant at some time or other, has its holiday, like anybody else, and is no

doubt glad of the change and rest. What is there to prove that Charles Dickens has not just gone out to smoke his pipe in the garden, or to have a chop and chips in the adjoining room ?

And it is quite pleasant to look round one's study and see a number of vacant chairs when one reflects the sort of people who might be sitting in them, if they were not vacant, a bailiff with his hat on his head, or a bore with a story in his mouth.

Victor Hugo at table was exuberant and monopolised the conversation. He did not care to listen. He was rhetorical, and towards the end of dinner grew excited and waved his hands. I remember once that at Hauteville House, having finished a large helping of little birds, more or less on toast, he pushed his plate across the table to my mother and, showing that all the bones had been crunched up by his august jaws, said : " That is not bad for a man of seventy-five."

I thought that it was very bad that a poet should eat up little singing birds, but then I was only a boy at the time.

Hugo was one of those writers whom I had in mind when I said that it is not well always to look behind the scenes. There was not a little false pretence in his assumption of universal knowledge. There is an axiom amongst a certain class of journalist that to pretend to know about a thing is quite as effective as a real knowledge. The use of certain technical words is a means of disguising ignorance. The amateur art-critic will avail himself of such terms as " chiaro-oscuro," " middle distance," " chromatic scheme," and so on. References to Louis XV. furniture, the " Renais-

sance style" and the use of similar terms will embellish the "copy" of the man describing an interior. Guy de Maupassant lashed these shams in his novel, "Bel-Ami," where Forestier explains the art of seeming to know, to Georges Duroy, the tyro. He concludes that all men are as ignorant as carps and can and should de duped. Hugo found it useful to appear to know, and one of his practices was to treasure up, docket and file every prospectus, circular and leaflet that might be sent to his house or be thrust into his hand in the streets. After a walk on the boulevards he would come home and empty out his pockets. Each trade has its particular phraseology, terms, names and expressions, and if ever that particular trade came under his pen he would look up anything he might have in his files concerning it, and fit himself out with a lot of technicalities which made the general public think how vast and universal was his knowledge and would particularly delight anybody connected in any way with that trade. People like to find in a book something about which they have special knowledge, and feel themselves on common ground with the author to the exclusion of the general public. I was surprised once to find that a very distinguished lady took an exceptional interest in a book of mine, and discovered the reason to be that a scene I had depicted was one with which she was familiar. My hero, an impoverished lawyer, puts in time in turning the handle of a mangle, which stands in the passage of the miserable cottage in which he is living. The lady had done much district-visiting and slumming in London and had frequently seen the mangle being turned

in the passage from the door. This charmed her with the book . . . other passages to which I had attached more importance had left her cold.

The mangle incident had been taken, by the way, from my own experiences, for when poor Ernest Dowson the poet was dying of consumption in the little cottage in Catford to which I had brought him I used to take a turn at the mangle while our landlady—the bricklayer's wife—was nursing him. It was hard work, and not very remunerative, the rate being "twelve articles for one penny" and some of the more bulky articles—and our customers were quite shameless in this respect—required a good deal of mangling. But by a strict attention to business I managed to satisfy the clients of the bricklayer's wife, and even to extend her connection, and, as for myself, I found that as "the man what works the mangle," or "the bloke with the mangle" I enjoyed in that meanest of mean streets a certain dignity and pre-eminence.

It was fame in its way, though no trumpets proclaimed it. And after all it is not always what is most noisy in this world which is most beautiful or most useful.

A fat, coarse city man rattling along in his 40 h.p. from his office to the nearest fish-bar, because he feels "like a dozen natives and a pint of stout," makes a terrific to-do, and really what he is doing is not of so much importance and gladdens nothing and nobody but himself. On the other hand the flight of say a yellow butterfly flitting from flower to flower in a narcissus-dotted field is an exquisite delight to the eye, a pure æsthetic joy. But not a sound is heard. The

beating of the tiny wings, the soft alightings on the unyielding petals do not reach the ear.

"What's all this noise about?"

This was the question asked the other day—according to a police court report—by a London tradesman of a poet who after reciting some verses outside his shop came in and asked for the due reward of his lyrical efforts. The poet had devised this means of turning his Muse to account. He composed poetry extolling the wares of shopkeepers, stood outside their premises, recited his verses to the passers-by, and then applied for a gratuity in payment of this novel advertisement. He declared in the police court that he "usually got his hand down for twopence."

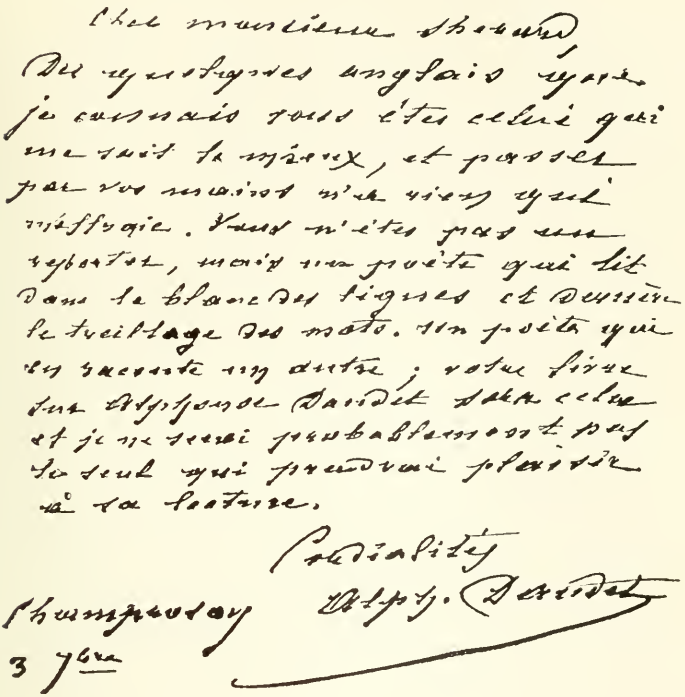
The poetry was not at all good; the rhymes, as the French say, were not millionaires, but that was not the reason of the shopkeeper's contempt. It was the universal contempt for poetry. I am quite sure that if a John Milton had come instead of the man in question, and in lieu of his doggerel had recited the finest passages from the "Paradise Lost," the same comment would have been made by the be-aproned man behind the counter: "What's all this noise about?"

One gets very tired indeed when people inform one that Milton only received five pounds for "Paradise Lost." I wonder what publisher nowadays would pay five pounds for an epic, or publish it at all except at the poet's expense. Five pounds for the poem was a very handsome honorarium, and shows that in those days publishers had more enterprise than they have to-day.

Modern authors must regret that to-day no-

where in Paternoster Row or round Covent Garden is to be met with a publisher like the one who purchased from Doctor Johnson the manuscript of an unknown writer called Goldsmith, a story about a vicar and his tribulations, and, what is more, paid spot-cash for it; actually, on the Doctor's recommendation, went to his strong box and counted out sixty golden sovereigns, handed them over and took the manuscript, which he had no present use for. The whole transaction, from the moment the Doctor first glanced at the written pages, in the dismal room in Wine Office Court, down to the time when he put into the author's trembling and eager hands the little bag of gold, did not last more than two hours at the most. Oh, happy days! What would happen to-day under similar circumstances? Imagine some poor author, not known to fame, starving in the Temple. Imagine some great man, let us say Chesterton or Hall Caine, coming to see how he could help him out of his difficulties. Imagine the author saying that his only available asset was a manuscript of about seventy thousand words. Imagine the great man going out to try and sell that manuscript. The very best that he could hope to bring back to the starving author would be a promise that "careful attention would be given to the novel," qualified, however, with the reminder that seventy thousand words was not a good length for a novel, and the suggestion that the "work" would stand a fairer chance if the author would consent to write in, say, another ten thousand words. And this would be the very best that the great man could hope to obtain for his friend, not in two hours, but

FACSIMILE OF A LETTER FROM ALPHONSE DAUDET TO MR. SHERARD.



Letter from Alphonse Daudet to Mr. Robert Sherard, in which he says: "Of the few Englishmen I know you are the man who knows me best, and to pass through your hands is nothing to frighten me. You are not a journalist, but a poet, etc." (*See page 78.*)

in twice as many days, provided he laid out large sums in taxi-cabs and made innumerable calls. At some places, in spite of the deference which his name and the confidence which his judgment would inspire, the proposal "could not be entertained." He would find publishers crowded out with manuscripts from unknown authors, he would find that they had not even time to examine them. Elsewhere he would find that the moral tone of the work—supposing it were like the "Vicar"—would not suit the firm, especially in view of the recent action of the libraries. All that about Thornhill and his amours would have to be suppressed before the manuscript could be considered at all.

And in the inconceivable event of there being a publisher in London who on the strength of a recommendation from a famous author like Chesterton or Hall Caine would consent to publish a manuscript which had not been "perused," there would be no earthly chance of any money being paid over the counter. Not sixty pounds, not six, not six pennies. A graduated royalty might be promised, or possibly a sum down on publication, cheque for which would be forwarded to the gentleman in the Temple in "due course." With this the great man and his protégé would have to be satisfied, and the only chance that I can see for the latter to relieve his immediate necessities, and get that sausage and mashed which is the banquet of modern Grub Street, will be, what, no doubt, he has had in mind ever since the transaction was initiated, to trouble the great man for a trifling loan—say half-a-crown.

However, the unknown English author might

hope some day—in "Due Course," let us say—to get some remuneration for his work, or at any-rate to find a publisher who would take the risk of its publication. In France such a hope would be the most wild delusion. French publishers never take any risks. "Get yourself known and I will publish" is their invariable answer to the person with the manuscript. In France, however, by the means of journalism a man may get himself known, and every successful author that one can think of in France made his beginning in the newspapers.

Very occasionally, on the strong recommendation of some person of high authority, a publisher may take the risk, but that is only in consideration of the fact that the great person will back his opinion by "booming" his protégé in the papers and amongst his friends. Thus quite recently Octave Mirbeau, who first brought Maeterlinck into public notice (on the opinion expressed on his poems, "Serres Chaudes," by François Coppée), recommended to a Parisian publisher the manuscript of an extraordinary novel called "Marie Claire," which was written by a poor dressmaker, Madame Marguérite Audoux. Marguérite Audoux, who lives on the "first floor as you come down from heaven"—to make use of the classical pleasantry of the Parisians in designating the sixth or top floor of a house, the attics—started in life as shepherdess in Sologne. After that she was employed in mending clothes at Bourges, then she came to Paris, with a penny-halfpenny in her pocket, got a place at a dressmaker's, but left this to enter the cartridge factory at Vincennes, where she

could earn two shillings a day. Out of these wages she was able to save enough to set up in business for herself as a dressmaker in the garret in the rue Léopold-Robert, to which universal attention has recently been drawn by the appearance of her first novel. The book, which is partly autobiographical, partly imaginative, was written by Marguérite Audoux "as a relaxation" from her drudgery with the needle. Its success is another proof that the best literary work is always done amidst poor surroundings. The manuscript, of which Frantz Jourdain, the red-bearded architect and author, so well known in Tout-Paris, was told by the late Charles Louis Philippe, formerly secretary to Madame Adam, was taken by him to Octave Mirbeau, who found it most interesting as a piece of literature and who took it to a publisher. The publisher, who would have fainted at the suggestion of printing a novel from the pen of a poor woman living in an attic and earning her livelihood by sewing, readily consented to bring it out when Mirbeau promised to write a preface and to see it through its early struggles. So the book came out, and all Paris was talking about it when I was last over there. Mirbeau's preface is most enthusiastic. "It is," he writes, "of great taste. Its simplicity, its truth, its elegance of thought, its depth, its originality are impressive. . . . What surprises us above all, and subjugates us is all the soft and melodious light which rises on this book, like the sun on a fine summer's morning."

Marguérite Audoux, at the time I am speaking of, was the most talked-of authoress in Paris, and if she had been an English authoress living in an

attic in Bloomsbury we should probably have seen her moving from that attic and taking a flat in Kensington. She would have had her " boom," and the rest would have been easy. And as in England, when once an author has made a big success, the publishers have unlimited confidence in him or her, and the public never goes back on anyone who has pleased them, fifty years hence we might be reading Marguérite Audoux's " grand new work." In France, however, things are different, and Marguérite Audoux knows that she can only hold her place by a steady upward progression in literary excellence. So she did not leave her garret, and she did not lay aside her needle, but slowly set to work on another book, which she does not expect to terminate for at least a couple of years. She is, by the way, a very slow worker. It took her, she says, five years to finish " Marie Claire " to her satisfaction. There was here no novel turned out in two weeks by dictating at the rate of seven thousand words a day to a typist. The period was forty-three times longer than the number of weeks fixed by George Gissing as the minimum time in which a novel can be written.

Whether the success of " Marie Claire " will bring her in any money, depends, of course, on the arrangement that Mirbeau was able to make for her. Possibly she may be entitled to a royalty of five *sous* a copy ; a publisher would hardly offer a beginner, even boomed by Mirbeau, more. But whether she makes a thousand francs, or a thousand pounds, she will not leave her garret. " Anything that the book may bring in will go into the Savings

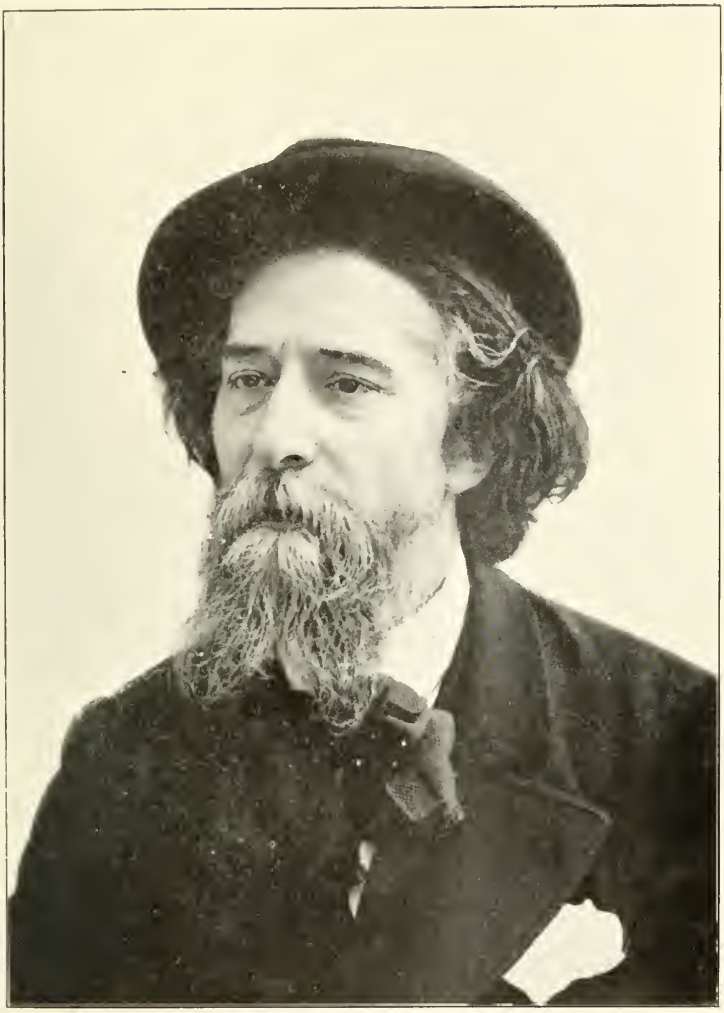
Bank. Then later on I may be able to take bigger premises and employ a workgirl or two." It is not often that one finds combined in one person an artist so perfect and a business woman so shrewd.

The remuneration of literary people of the rank and file is in France almost as bad as it is in England. In some cases it is worse. Translators, for instance, are shamefully paid in Paris, unless they belong to the guild of sworn translators, who have a pretty stiff tariff. One day, at a time when I was earning a biggish income in journalism in Paris, I received from a well-known publisher, "to whom my name had been favourably mentioned," an offer to translate a novel by Paul and Victor Marguéritte, entitled "Ma Grande," a work of over two hundred thousand words, for twelve pounds. This was a much worse offer than was once made to George Moore, who was asked whether he would translate Zola's "Nana" for fifty pounds. Moore's answer was characteristic. He wrote back: "Why ask silly questions? Would you eat a pound of"—well, no matter, Moore was a naturalist in those days—"for a penny?" I did not answer the gentleman who wished me to do a translation at the rate of one shilling and twopence farthing per thousand. A much better offer came my way some time later in London, when for a translation of Dumas's novels, "to be done in a bright lively style," a fee of two shillings per thousand was offered with the proviso that the editor's name was to appear on the title-page as the translator.

Two shillings a thousand words! Why, that is

less, very much less than a skilled typist can earn in New York. Last year, when I was over there having some work copied I sent my manuscript to a typewriting office, fondly imagining that in the home of the typewriter the charges for copying *à la machine* could not possibly be higher than they are in England. I certainly did not expect to pay those horrible sweating rates which one sees advertised, sevenpence or eightpence a thousand words, advertisements which I never read without a pang at the thought of the poor girls who have to work in these offices, but I was certainly not prepared for the stupendous bill which accompanied my copies. I forget the amount, but I know that it worked out at considerably more than four shillings per thousand words, and there were other little charges which made up an appalling total.

Talking of typewriting reminds me that just before he left the rue Bellechasse, at the time when he and I were working together on the book called "Premier Voyage, Premier Mensonge," Daudet got me to explain to him very minutely the working of the typewriter. He told me that he had such extreme difficulty in writing with a pen, owing to his infirmities, that he was seriously thinking of buying a machine. I said I did not see the author of "Sapho" composing his delicate and chiselled phrases on a typewriter, although I admitted I had seen Crockett turning out five thousand words of good reading every morning before breakfast by that means, but Daudet would not be satisfied until I had brought him my machine and he had had a try at the keys. And what decided him against the purchase was the tinkling of the little



ALPHONSE DAUDET,
With whom Mr. Sherard collaborated on the work, "Premier Voyage, Premier Mensongee."

bell towards the end of each line. "That would drive me wild," he said. And though I assured him that unfortunately one gets accustomed to the sound, and, with often disastrous results to one's copy, disregards its warning, he declared that nothing would induce him to have a machine. "That recurring ding," he said, "would be to my brain like the drop of water falling on one's head in the torture of the Inquisition."

The Daudet book, "Premier Voyage, Premier Mensonge," translated after his death from my English book, "My First Lie," has, I am glad to see, been very successful in France, and a little while ago was in its twenty-fifth thousand. I do not regret that I made no arrangement to have a royalty on the French version, but I feel sorry that Daudet never saw the success of the book. His intention was, had he lived, to use the idea over again and rewrite it himself in French. Possibly had he done so it would not have been as successful as the present version. *Habent sua fata libelli.*

Daudet's great difficulties of penmanship inspired his excellent secretary and friend, Monsieur Ebner, afterwards editor of the *Journal Officiel* to acquire a handwriting which was so exactly like that of his employer that very few people could say whether a letter from Daudet to them was written by the master or by Monsieur Ebner. Ebner could even imitate Daudet's signature so perfectly that a vast number of spurious autographs of the author of "Jack" are being treasured by their owners. I wonder how many of our great authors, with huge balances at the bank,

would like to have a secretary with such calligraphic accomplishments. Very few, I am thinking.

Some people, not of the Jim the Penman type, have extraordinary talents in the matter of imitating different handwritings. I remember that many years ago I was collecting signatures to a petition for the reprieve of some unfortunate creature under sentence of death. One night, visiting one of those Bohemian clubs which remained open till dawn, I asked various people to sign. I met with little success—for disreputable characters at large have little sympathy with those who are in gaol—until I came upon a queer old man, who seemed quite pleased at the proposal. "Can't get many signatures?" he said. "Well, I'll make that all right. Give me the petition and one of those sheets." He then called for pen and ink, tucked back his cuff and set to work. In a few minutes he had affixed not less than fifty signatures to the petition, each in a different handwriting, and each corresponding to the quality of the supposed writer. He had a farmer with a sprawling autograph, a spinster lady with a fine pointed Italian hand, and so on. It was an extraordinary production, and I have no doubt that he would have added many more signatures in different "hands of write" had I not stopped him by pointing out that no good purpose could be served by what he was doing, as such a fraud might defeat the object of the petition.

The practice—humiliating as it is—of presenting "humble petitions" to the nation's ruler never obtained in France even under the autocratic

kings. It would have been resented by them as an insolent attempt to give direction to the divine will. The *placet,* or individual petition, was at most allowed, and the public writers used to find in the writing of these humble supplications to the kings a considerable source of income. It was to this that the old *bouquetière* to whom I have alluded above was referring when she said that my trade was a good one only under the monarchy. Even the *placet* was often resented as an impertinence, and nobody knew better how to impress displeasure on the supplicant than the frumpish Duchesse d'Angoulême, when approached with these written appeals by the friends of condemned Bonapartists.

In France to-day, as in former days, the only appeal to the clemency of the ruler that is made on behalf of a man sentenced to death is by the barrister who defended him at his trial. It is always made. The barrister considers it a part of his duty not to abandon his client until the very end. He often is present in his cell just before the arrival of Monsieur Deibler. There is a difference here between the French and the English advocate. The latter considers his connection with the prisoner and his case over and done when he has drawn a St Andrew's cross over the endorsement on his brief and has scribbled in "Guilty—Death."

A leading barrister who has visited all the presidents who have occupied the Elysée since the foundation of the Third Republic was speaking at dinner one night about the different ways in which these gentlemen received him on these occasions.

Thiers was very talkative and wanted all sorts of details. MacMahon seemed to think that there was a great deal of fuss being made about one man's life. He was a soldier with a soldier's disregard for death, a commander who did not attach much importance to the individual.

"MacMahon," said this gentleman, "was not a very clear-headed man, and it was difficult to get him to follow one's argument. He lacked in *esprit de suite*, and kept going off at tangents. He was the true MacMahon of the '*C'est vous le négre? Eh bien, continuez.*'"

This remark of the field-marshal's, "Oh, it's you who are the negro? Well, continue," is one of the sayings of public men in France which has most amused the French. One hears it constantly quoted as one of the funniest things that was ever said unwittingly. MacMahon was inspecting the Ecole Polytechnique one day and in the courtyard came across a negro scholar, from one of the French colonies, of whom he had heard from the commandant. He addressed him in the ellipsis quoted. Obviously what he wanted to say was: "Oh, it's you who are the negro. I hear you are doing well. Continue to do so." What amused the French so much was that the marshal, with the habitual conciseness of a man accustomed to giving orders, phrased his remark so that he seemed to be saying: "Continue to be a negro." And no doubt some of the popularity of this saying could be traced back to MacMahon's enemies, who would quote it as a proof of the President's muddle-headedness. We have all heard of the magistrate who addressed a prisoner as follows:—"You have

had every advantage of a college education, instead of which you go about stealing barometers."

Felix Faure took his rôle of head of the State with the power of clemency very seriously indeed—so the barrister referred to related. He postured and swelled and was more dramatic on these occasions than usually. But he was, as ever, also very genial, and frequently misled his visitor as to his intentions towards the convict. "I used to go away feeling quite elated," said the advocate, "feeling sure that I had made it all right for my man. But alas! the President's *bonhomie* was often of sinister rather than of auspicious augury."

Carnot on these occasions was Sphinx-like as ever. "With Carnot, however, I knew that the case would be studied with the most scrupulous attention."

And the fact is that no chief of a State can ever more conscientiously have carried out his duty in this respect. Carnot would often spend the best part of a night, after the busiest of days, in studying a condemned man's dossier, and if it did return to the Ministry of Justice without any comment—which meant that the power of clemency could not be exercised in this case—it was because he had been unable to find in any of the papers anything to justify such a measure. Personally, as I know, he was opposed to the death penalty, he who later was to perish amidst terrible sufferings at the hands of a cowardly assassin.

It would once, under Carnot's presidency, have been in my power to save the life of a murderer by simply leaving a window open. I should not have been sorry to have saved the man's life—he

was duly executed afterwards—because I knew something about the case and thought that the convict had been harshly dealt with. There were extenuating circumstances which had not been brought to the knowledge of the jury.

In the company of the late Adrien Marie, the clever black and white artist, I was visiting the Palace of Fontainebleau at a time when Monsieur Carnot and his family were in residence there. We were getting up an article on the President's life in the country for *The Daily Graphic*. Accompanied by the commandant of the military household we were taken through all the rooms occupied by him. Carnot's suite was on the ground floor in the right wing of the palace. We lingered some time in his workroom and looked with awe at the Empire table covered with papers.

"Of great import to the State," I remarked to the commandant, pointing to a pile of papers.

"Oh no, not so much," said the officer. "As a matter of fact it is the dossier of X——, who was sentenced to death at the last assizes. Monsieur le President has been working at it this morning and will return to it after you have gone."

The Empire table stood in the centre of the President's cabinet parallel to the fireplace, in which a bright fire was blazing.

The three large windows in the room opened out on a lovely garden, and as the others were moving out of the study I went up to one of these windows and opened it, thinking to step out and look at the flowers. A terrific gust of wind blew in, and at that very moment it occurred to me that if I left the window open for an instant or two every

scrap of paper on the President's table would fatally be blown into the fire. However, instinctively on feeling the wind I had pushed the window to. A moment or two later the commandant, who had missed me, returned into the room and asked me to come away as "Monsieur le President" could not be kept away from his work any longer.

If I had left the window open, or had opened it again, and if, as would have happened, any of the papers of X——'s dossier had been blown into the fire, the President, no longer having before him the materials on which to judge the whole case, would certainly have granted a reprieve. And that is what the commandant himself told me when I apologised for having opened the window and said that I might have done much mischief by my imprudence. "All these papers," I remarked, "would have gone into the fire."

"Which," said the officer, "would have been a very good thing for X——. *Le patron*" (the boss) "would never have let a man be guillotined if his dossier had been destroyed or was incomplete."

"In other words," I said, "if I had put my head out of the window, X—— would have been spared the necessity of doing so."

In argot, the criminal when his head is pushed into the *lunette* of the guillotine is said to be "looking out of the window."

Both Monsieur Loubet and Monsieur Fallières are strongly opposed to capital punishment. Fallières, they say, hates the sight of a condemned man's dossier. "*Voila encore ce qui va me gâter la digestion*" (Now here is again something that will upset my digestion) is a remark he once made

when, on entering his office, he saw a parcel of papers from the Ministry of Justice. He is in favour of clemency being exercised, if advisable, not by one individual but by the Committee of Pardons of the Ministry of Justice. He says it is too great a responsibility to throw upon one man to decide on the life and death of a fellow-being.

However, in France juries are so extraordinarily lenient that Monsieur Fallières is rarely called upon to fulfil this most distasteful of his duties. As time goes on the juries seem to grow more and more reluctant to convict ; their humanitarianism seems to grow maudlin in its sentimentality. A very short while ago a jury acquitted a woman who had murdered her husband—she would most certainly have been hanged in England—and before leaving the witness box made a collection on her behalf. Since the abolition of the resumé, or summing-up, extraordinary verdicts are given. I have noticed and listened to many such, but I think that what Americans would call the " limit " was the result of a recent trial at Versailles, where, by the way, the juries are the most severe of any in France. Two brothers were tried for wilful murder of their uncle. They had learned that the old man intended to change his will and disinherit them, so one night they broke into his house and murdered him under circumstances of great brutality. Both brothers were equally guilty. They had planned and discussed the crime together ; together they had carried it out. Well, while returning a verdict which sent the elder brother to penal servitude for life, they acquitted the younger brother. The latter not only gets off scot-free but will enjoy the

whole of the old man's fortune. Even if the elder could benefit from his share in any way he is debarred by the law from deriving any advantage from his crime. Accordingly the *innocent* younger brother gets everything.

CHAPTER VI

Genius, Fat or Thin ?—Notabilities in Either Camp—Gautier and les Femmes Maigres—Voltaire as a Usurer—His Dramatic Works—Lamartine and the Retriever—The Roumanian Student and his Rules of Conduct—Chocolate as a Drink—Balzac's Favourite Breakfast Dish—Napoleon and Ménéval—Talleyrand and the Tzar—A Reward for Disloyalty—A Nobleman's Marriage Contract—A Thirty-five-thousand-bottle Man—Jean Chapelain and the Civil List—Chapelain, Halfpenny Wise—The Duke and his Fees—A Reception at the Academy—The Key of the Fields—Pailleron, his Visitor and the Valet—In Monsieur Claretie's Box—A Tumultuous Evening—The *Rentrée* of Monsieur Lebargy

THE reference in the preceding chapter to Zola at table reminds me of an interesting discussion to which I have often listened in Parisian literary circles. This is the examination of a question which was formerly greatly argued upon : Ought the man of genius to be fat or thin ?

It is a curious fact that Zola was at his best, and wrote his finest books, when he was very stout. As his abdomen diminished so also did his talent. His last productions were very poor indeed by comparison with the work produced in the imperial days of his genius and his adiposity.

Théophile Gautier, who himself was enormous, maintained that the man of genius ought to be fat. He pointed to that " more barrel than man," Honoré de Balzac. He referred to the plumpness of Victor Hugo, who always looked most comfortable. Rossini, " that hippopotamus in breeches," Saint-Beuve, famous for his " Causeries du Lundi "

and the pork dinner of which he partook in company with Prince Napoleon on a certain Good Friday, and Alexandre Dumas father, "always fat and always jolly," were, according to Gautier, examples also of the truth of his argument.

In England we have a very stout writer whom many consider a man of genius, Chesterton. Dr Johnson, his prototype, was elephantine. Byron was fattening up before he died, and used to take all kinds of antidotes. Thackeray was plump, Oscar Wilde was growing obese before his catastrophe came, and prison probably saved him from losing his splendid figure. On the other hand Wordsworth was very thin, and Hall Caine is a wisp of a man. Lamartine and Baudelaire, the two poles of French poetry in the middle of the nineteenth century, would have inspired Cæsar with suspicion. Alfred de Musset and de Vigny could have vied with them in leanness, whilst looking farther back we have in Voltaire the thinnest of mortals, beside whom the spare Alighieri was a man of portly habit.

Alphonse Daudet, again, who was quite as much a gourmet as Zola, was always scant of form, and this is perhaps the only point on which the two writers can be compared. For if the lean Daudet was an exquisite artist, and the writer of many beautiful things, Zola soars far above him as a man of genius. But be it repeated again that when Zola began to lose weight he also lost talent.

The lower and middle classes in France, by the way, admire stoutness in women almost as much as do the Turks. "*C'est une belle femme*" does not mean, as it appears to do, a "beautiful," but a

"stout woman." I remember introducing an American lady journalist in a provincial town to Jules Verne, the novelist. I myself admired the young woman very much. She had a very pretty face, and all those slender, clinging, gracile advantages of form which in England—at least to judge from Charles Garvice's heroines and the passions which they inspire—are so highly appreciated. After the lady had gone: "Mon Dieu," cried old Monsieur Verne, "what a pity to see a clever girl like that so shabbily treated by nature. Such few natural advantages." I ventured to suggest that she was a pretty woman. "Why, she is as thin as a match," he cried, "and has nothing behind nor before."

One of the most popular *café* concert singers that I ever saw on the boulevard stage was a woman of enormous proportions, and her great vogue dated from the first night on which she sang a song extolling the abundance of her figure. The refrain of this song, which took Paris by storm, was: "I crack hazel-nuts by sitting down on them."

La forte chanteuse, that is to say, the very stout lady singer, has, as any theatrical agent in Paris can affirm, a very much better chance of securing an engagement than the gracile one. It is no doubt the domineering spirit of the Anglo-Saxon male which makes him prefer his women to be delicate of appearance. In no other countries is the thin woman appreciated.

"To Hades," cried Théophile Gautier, "with great sentiments and thin women" (*Au diable les grands sentiments et les femmes maigres*).

With regard to Voltaire's thinness, no doubt

to a certain extent it was caused by his habit of drinking coffee excessively and still more so by the fact that being very greedy of money he used to lie awake at night thinking out all sorts of plans for increasing his wealth. If in those days—as is the law in England now—usurers had been obliged in France to register their real names, the admirers of the author of "Candide" would have found in the list that of François Marie Arouet.

Voltaire's reputation as a dramatic author at least has long since died a natural death. This fact was unpleasantly borne in upon me one day in Paris, when adverse circumstances were forcing me to dispose of my library piecemeal. I had a complete collection of Voltaire's dramatic works, very handsomely bound in leather, with gilt lettering, numerous plates and so forth. Personally having neither liking for nor interest in these books, I determined that they should be the first to go. But the bookseller whom I summoned to my flat to trade with me laughed cynically when I pointed to this handsome collection of *œuvres dramatiques*.

"Oh!" he cried, "is it for that that Monsieur has bothered me? Voltaire's theatre. Why, the best I can offer Monsieur is to take the books away without charging him anything for my trouble."

I fancied this was a mere artful way of beating me down, but the man was quite in earnest, and assured me that the books had absolutely no commercial value at all, that he would never be able to sell them, and would only take them away because they were attractively bound and would look well on one of the top shelves in his shop.

It is almost as sad for an author to have to sell his books as it is for an actress to have to dispose of her jewels. But the saddest disposal of all is when circumstances force one to sell one's dog. And this reminds me of a very kind thing done by one of the lean men, to whom I refer above, the poet Lamartine. A poor woman once wrote to him that she was in great distress, and that, having noticed how much he seemed to admire her black retriever, she wanted to know whether he would consent to buy it from her for a sum which she mentioned, a sum of which she stood in pressing need.

Very shortly afterwards she received from Lamartine a letter enclosing the amount, with a message to the effect that no man had any right to buy another person's dog. "One does not separate mistress and dog." He did not object, however, in this case, to do a thing he abhorred, provided that the lady would oblige him by keeping the dog at her house until he sent for it.

Lamartine towards the end of his life was a very poor man and could ill afford such generosity. That he may be cited amongst the lean men of genius may have arisen from the fact that he often let himself want so as to be able to relieve others.

A very different scheme of life was that of a Roumanian student whom I saw being tried before the police magistrates in Paris for obtaining goods by false pretences. He was charged with having cheated everybody who had trusted him. One of the principal pieces of evidence against him on the head of felonious intent to defraud was a list of rules of conduct which he had actually pinned

to the wall of his bedroom in the hotel in the Latin Quarter which he favoured with his patronage. It began somewhat as follows, and was listened to with shouts of laughter in court :—

RULES TO BE OBSERVED

(1) To take a cup of chocolate and two milk rolls first thing in the morning ;
(2) Not to pay my washerwoman ;
(3) Not to pay that pig of a tailor ;

and so on, until the final conclusion was reached :

"Poser un lapin général,"

a piece of French argot which can only be rendered by using English slang and which means "Bilk everybody all round."

In this case the humour of the thing did not disarm the magistrates, and the student's lack of altruism was severely punished.

When I first went to Paris twenty-eight years ago, chocolate was still a favourite beverage both in households and in the *cafés*. Tortoni's was famous for its *bavaroises*, but at almost every *café* the chocolate pot with the whirl-stick with which the waiter, before pouring it out, brought the fragrant liquid to froth, were familiar sights. Nowadays the Parisians hardly ever ask for chocolate in the *cafés*. They prefer beer. In households coffee is the usual breakfast drink, but tea is also largely used. In my first years in Paris tea was still looked upon as a medicinal decoction and was rarely taken except as an antidote to indigestion. There are still one or two *cafés* in Paris where the sale of chocolate as a beverage is a speciality, the

principal of these being opposite the Gymnase Theatre, but the taste is dying out.

It makes rather a cloying and bilious breakfast, and one can understand that as such it should have fallen into desuetude.

In the matter of bilious qualities, however, the fragrant *bavaroise* can compare most advantageously with what was the favourite first *déjeuner* of one of the fat men of genius to whom reference is made higher up. This was Monsieur Honoré de Balzac, who, after working like a giant all night, used to breakfast off a large box of sardines, without bread. He mashed the little, oily fish up into a paste, added further oil and pepper and vinegar, and greedily devoured the mess. It is little wonder that on this regime he came to look, as Gautier put it, "more like a tun than a man." Yet he fancied it was the best thing for his health, and Balzac was very careful of himself, hoping to live to be a hundred years old and, as the last survivor in a tontine in which he was interested, to become very rich if he could last out.

His mash of sardines as a first meal cannot, however, have been as injurious as what the great Napoleon used to take early every morning. The Emperor used to sit in a very hot bath and devour ices. Ménéval relates this in his Memoirs, and the fact explains why the Emperor's health declined so rapidly after he reached middle age.

Middle age, middle age! It has just occurred to me that on some future day we of the great twentieth century will be talked about by posterity as people living in the Middle Ages.

I have always been amused, speaking of Ménéval,

at the naïve way in which the worthy baron explains why his devotion to his imperial master did not lead him to follow him into exile after Waterloo. He states that he did make efforts to get out to St Helena, but that difficulties arose which made it impossible. One would have respected his memory much more if he had frankly stated that after Waterloo he had got quite sick of Napoleon and was very pleased to be rid of him, so as to enjoy what he had earned in his service and his title of baron in peace and quiet. As to his efforts to get out to St Helena, they doubtless amounted to no more than his going to the office of the packets sailing for that island, asking when there would be a boat out, and, on being given a date, remarking that he would see about it. Or perhaps the next boat was full up. . . . Anyhow, Ménéval never did follow Napoleon to St Helena.

The recent marriage of the Prince de Sagan to Anna Gould reminded me of the account that Baron de Ménéval gives in his Memoirs of the way in which the principality of Sagan came into the Talleyrand family. During the meeting at Erfurt in 1808 between Napoleon and Alexander of Russia, Talleyrand was in the habit of going to see the Tzar every morning, while his imperial master was asleep. He would then inform Alexander of everything that had been discussed between him and Napoleon on the previous evening, so that when Napoleon himself met Alexander the latter was fully prepared for all his moves. When the Tzar was leaving Erfurt for Russia at the end of the congress he thanked Talleyrand very much for the great services he had rendered him and asked

him if he could do anything to mark his appreciation of his services.

"Yes, indeed you can," answered the treacherous minister. "*He* keeps all the heiresses in France as brides for his non-commissioned officers. Now I have two nephews whom I wish to set up in life, and as things are I have not an earthly chance of finding them rich wives at home. Now for my eldest nephew I have been thinking of the daughter of the Duchess of Courland, and if you could put in a word for me with that lady, so that she might be disposed to look favourably on my nephew's suit for her daughter's hand, you would be rendering me a signal service."

"I can do that very well, Monsieur de Talleyrand," said the Tzar, "and all the more easily that it is my intention on my way home to Petersburg to spend a couple of days as the guest of the Duchess. I will certainly speak to her about your nephew and express my hope that this alliance may be contracted."

The Duchess of Courland was Princess of Sagan and it was through this alliance that the rich Prussian principality passed into French hands.

Whenever the inglorious band of impoverished noblemen who have married rich women for their money is being discussed in my presence, I always think of a certain marriage contract of the eighteenth century, which in abjectness on the part of the bridegroom is, I think, "the limit."

This contract was the one drawn up on 22nd September 1751, in Paris, between the Marquis de Fleury and a certain Mademoiselle Defresne, dancer at the Royal Academy of Music, in the presence of

a notary-public. It is given in Monsieur Champardon's book, "L'Académie Royale de Musique," and is so strange a *document humain* that I must quote it *in extenso*.

Here it is, with the lady's stipulations and the man's rejoinders.

CONDITIONS ON WHICH I AM READY TO MARRY M. LE MARQUIS DE FLEURY

CLAUSE 1—M. le Marquis de Fleury will marry me on Tuesday the 28th of this month at the church of St Roch, my parish church, and as I have no time to attend to the fees and banns, M. de Fleury will be good enough to deal with these matters, in return for the sum of 50 crowns which I shall hand over to him as soon as this contract has been signed.

ANSWER—Agreed for March 28th ; provided the fifty crowns be enough to cover all expenses, I will see after everything, but I beg Mlle Defresne to take note of the fact that I am not able to go out because I need a coat and a wig.

CLAUSE 2—M. le Marquis will be good enough to attend on the Tuesday, 28th, in the church of St Roch, at the entrance to the chapel of the Virgin with one of his known friends, and as soon as he sees me with one of my friends he will take my hand and lead me up to the altar where we shall be married.

ANSWER—Agreed as regards the hour and the rendezvous, although it is humiliating for me not to be allowed to fetch you at your house, but *not* agreed as regards the friend, my wretched position having left me nobody but my shoemaker whom I will bring with me whatever may happen.

CLAUSE 3—Directly after we have signed the register, I will hand over 300 francs to M. le Marquis de Fleury as the first quarter in advance of the annuity of 1200 francs which I undertake to pay him until the day when it shall please the Almighty to remove me from this world, mortgaging for this purpose a deed which I hold from the Marquis of Fimarcon, of the value of 24,000 francs. M. le Marquis will be so good as to have in readiness a receipt in due form for the 300 francs.

ANSWER—All right as concerns the 300 francs of which I stand in the greatest need, but I refuse the security of the deed unless it be guaranteed by some substantial person or unless Mlle Defresne gives me instead shares in the East India Company, or Municipal bonds, as it is not fair that I should give my name for nothing.

CLAUSE 4—M. le Marquis will give the most solemn undertaking that it is possible to give to legitimise my daughter and my three sons, to acknowledge himself their father and to allow them, as well as myself, to assume and wear the titles, name, arms and liveries of the house of Fleury.

ANSWER—Agreed since I can't help it, but that means becoming the father of four children in return for a morsel of bread.

CLAUSE 5—M. le Marquis will leave me as soon as we come out of church, will take a cab and go wherever he may think fit with his friend, and will undertake in writing here and now never to set foot inside my house, nor anywhere else where I may be.

ANSWER—Agreed upon with all my heart. For the rest you would not find me of much use.

CLAUSE 6—M. le Marquis will send every quarter to Mr Le Noir's, notary, who lives at the corner of the rue de l'Echelle, who will hand over 300 francs against a receipt in due form.

ANSWER—I shall take jolly good care not to miss doing so.

CLAUSE 7 AND LAST—And as it is seemly that I should make people respect the name that I am about to bear, I undertake to spend six months, beginning to-morrow, in a house of religion, where I shall assume an air of decency suitable to my new position.

ANSWER—All right, but it seems to me that this temporary retirement is very useless; besides a husband at 1200 francs a year isn't very well able to make any display. But just as you like.

Champardon informs us that the Marquis de Fleury died eight months after this marriage. The

Marquise (*née* Defresne) lived twenty years, and died in abject poverty. One of the legitimised sons became a captain of dragoons, the other was captain in a regiment of the line.

Being interested in this extraordinary marquis, I made some researches to see if I could find out anything about him, and gained the information that he owed his downfall to his fondness for wine, and that after his marriage with the dancer he relapsed into his bad habits, so that every *sou* of the Marquise de Fleury's nine hundred francs was spent on drink, a circumstance to which that good lady was indebted for the lapse of her obligation towards her husband.

Monsieur de Fleury was evidently not of the same constitution as a certain gentleman I read of the other day, whose portrait was in 1803 hanging in the old Bull Inn in Bishopsgate. Attached to this portrait was a manuscript on parchment describing it as "The Portrait of Mr Van Horn, a Hamburg merchant, Belonged to a club called 'The Amicable Society' held at the Bull Inn, Bishopsgate, for a period of 22 years. During the above period he drank 35,680 bottles of wine, which makes 2973 dozen and 4 bottles, averaging at nearly four bottles and a half a day, and did not miss drinking the above quantity but two days—the one of which was the burial of his wife, and the other the marriage of his daughter, and lived until he was 90 years of age. Painted by Mr Hymove in the year 1743."

The histories of the different Royal Academies in Paris are all most interesting, especially that of the French Academy, so detested by Alphonse

Daudet. Just now as I was writing out poor de Fleury's remarks about the smallness of the annuity offered him by the *danseuse* I was thinking of a certain Jean Chapelain, Academician from the foundation, to whom Colbert entrusted the allotment of the Sun-King's pensions to men of letters. The list is a curious one. He put Molière, whom he describes as an excellent comic poet, down for one thousand francs a year. To Corneille, "the first dramatic poet in the world," he assigns two thousand francs, but to Racine, who comes right at the bottom of the list, and who is dismissed with the mention, "a French poet," he only granted eight hundred francs.

Edmond de Goncourt, by the way, would have said that in regard both to Corneille and to Racine, Jean Chapelain was much too generous, and that neither of these famous men had any right to figure on the Civil List. Goncourt had no opinion at all of either Corneille or Racine, whom we have always been taught to consider as amongst the chief glories of French literature.

"After all," he says, "Corneille and Racine were never anything else but 'arrangers' of Greek, Latin and Spanish verses and plays. By themselves alone, they never found, or invented, or created anything."

And the fact is that their works are a drug in the market and that no second-hand bookseller will pay anything more for them than for the dramatic works of Voltaire.

This Jean Chapelain was a curious old fellow, distinguished rather for his miserly meanness than for the quality of his literary output. He was most

constant in his attendance at the Academy, because there was and is a small honorarium paid to each Academician for his presence at a sitting. And it is extraordinary how keen the Academicians are about these *jetons de presence.* The amounts are paid over at the Academy cashier's desk on a certain day each month, the cash being placed in a paper bag with the Academician's name and dates of attendance on a ticket pinned to it. It is amusing to see how these distinguished gentlemen examine their tickets to see if they have been credited with the right amount. There was a certain very wealthy duke, the leader of what is known in the Academy as the "*partie des ducs,*" who was always disputing his total. He used to drive up to the Institute in a splendid carriage and pair, and then haggle over his attendance fees, till the poor employee got to hate the sight of him.

Chapelain's stinginess may have been equal to this nobleman's, but at any rate he paid for it with his life. It is related of him that going to the Academy one day, he found that his passage down the rue St Honoré was barred by a stream of water from some overflow—it was raining cats and dogs at the time. A plank had been laid over the stream by some speculator, who demanded a half-penny from everybody who used it. Chapelain did not care to part with that small coin, and so remained in the drenching rain, hoping that the water would subside, but when the quarter to three struck and reminded him that if he was not at the Academy in fifteen minutes he would lose his cherished fee, he bravely stepped into the water and crossed it like a ford. He was seventy-nine

years old, and the chill he contracted was fatal to him. His fortune amounted to over twelve thousand pounds, of which more than eight thousand pounds were found in cash in his house.

The last visit that I paid to the Academy was in the spring of last year. Monsieur Jules Claretie, the director of the Comédie Française, in whose box I spent an evening, seeing the *Marquis de Priola,* asked me if I would care to be present at the reception of René Doumic. I remembered the occasion of Rostand's reception, an unforgettable experience, and gladly accepted Monsieur Claretie's offer of a ticket of admission. Alas! between the poet Rostand and his friends, and Monsieur Doumic of the *Revue des Deux Mondes* and the Ecole Normale and his followers, what a mighty difference! Doumic is the typical French professor, a mordant critic, academic in the bad sense of the word, a man with little sympathy. I do not think I ever spent a less agreeable five quarters of an hour than listening to his speech. Rostand's eulogy of his predecessor was a pure delight to the ear as to the mind. For the rest, the circular hall was packed at Doumic's reception, as it was at Rostand's. On neither occasion could a single other person have entered. It is, one may observe, rather *chic* to be present as the invited guest of an Academician, at an Academy reception, and snobbishness makes many people endure hours of discomfort and tedium. I was wedged close up to Ernest Lajeunesse, who, at my expressing a wish to get away, before the proceedings commenced, for I began to have an intuition of what was awaiting us from the physiognomies of the audience,

told me that that would be considered an unheard-of breach of etiquette. Nobody, he said, has ever been known to leave an Academy sitting until all is over. However, after listening to René Doumic for an hour and a quarter . . . well, there is an old schoolboy trick for getting out of the classroom. One puts one's handkerchief up to one's nose, and, "Please, sir, my nose is bleeding." And by means of that trick I managed to get away before Jules Lemaître rose to welcome the new Academician. The people on my bench—on which we were packed like sardines in a tin—evidently preferred my room to my company, for they readily made room for me to pass, and one very stout old lady was heard to say, "*A la bonne heure.* Now we shall be able to breathe." The Municipal guard on sentry go in the passage told me that it was a good thing for nose-bleeding to put a door-key down one's neck. I said nothing, but thought to myself that the key I was going to use was what the French call the "key of the fields," which means to get out into the open, away from restraint, out into freedom. A kind inquiry or two were afterwards made at my hotel as to my condition, and coupled with these was an expression of regret that my indisposition had deprived me of the pleasure of listening to Jules Lemaître's magnificent oration. No, I had listened to one sermon and a very long one, and I had no relish at all for the perlicue. The audience were typical of that "*Monde où l'on s'ennuie*" which inspired Pailleron, and which was drawn from the world round the ponderous *Revue des Deux Mondes.* It will be remembered that Maxime Pailleron married a daughter of the director

of that review, and so had ample opportunities of studying his characters from the tedious people who used to come to his father-in-law's house. I never could imagine the cheerful, genial, sympathetic Pailleron, most Parisian of Parisians, in that galley, and indeed after some years he cut himself loose from his wife's family. If one called at the house on the quai d'Orsay, the porter always used to ask whether it was Monsieur or Madame Pailleron that one wished to see. It appears that different staircases led to the Pailleron apartment, which had been divided into two with a door locked and bolted on both sides separating the two flats. On the first occasion on which I called on Pailleron it was the master himself who opened the door. He was dressed in a rough suit and certainly did not look like a wealthy Academician. I asked the man if Monsieur Pailleron was at home, and he, being amused that I did not recognise so well-known a boulevardier, pretended to be his own valet and mimicked the suspicious domestic who is trying to keep off some importunate caller, in a very clever manner. When he had had his fun, and just as I was going to offer him a dollar to take my name in, he caught me by the arm and drew me into the antechamber with a " Come on in. I am Pailleron."

I had called on Maxime Pailleron that day to ask him, as I had been asking all the Academicians, whether it would not be a good thing for England if an institution were founded there on the same lines and for the same purposes as the Institute created by Richelieu, the French Academy. I forget what his opinion on this question was, though probably he shrugged his broad shoulders

in deprecation of an interference in English matters. From this topic I had gone on to speak in general of the functions of an Academy, and this is what Pailleron said to me: "The Academy performs an important function in acting as a brake on the too rapid development of the French language. That is why it is so absurd to joke about the eternal non-completion of the dictionary of the Academy. How can it ever be completed? Does not the French language change day after day? The function of the French Academy—they are fools who say the contrary—is not to fix the French language, but to take cognisance of its gradual changes. Words rapidly lose in value, especially in this age of exaggeration of everything. This is the noisy time of journalism, the time of sonorous phrases, and a word that a year ago was worth in emphasis—so to speak—five francs, may to-day be hardly worth twopence halfpenny. I can remember a time when one would say of a bad thing that it was bad, *mauvais*. To-day the mildest qualification that we should apply to the same thing would be the word *infecte*" (putrid).

"I have noticed that myself," I remarked, "with reference to the word *ennuyeux*. When I first came to Paris, *ennuyeux* was quite a strong expression for annoying, tedious, boresome. It was considered very bad form, very vulgar, to use the word *embêtant*. Nowadays one has gone far beyond *embêtant*. You know the word that is used instead."

"Yes, the word that Zola is so fond of."

This brought me on the reason of Zola's persistent exclusion from the Academy. I referred

to the many good men who had been passed over in previous years by the Academy, and specially cited Balzac and Dumas.

"Certainly," said Monsieur Pailleron, "as far as literary merit went, both Balzac and Dumas should have been elected. The objection against them was that both were bankrupt traders. Yes, both Balzac and Dumas went into business and both failed commercially. The Academy could not open its doors to bankrupt traders. The French Academy can only receive the most honourable."

"Daudet," I remarked, "has told us different things."

"Daudet's book about the Academy, 'L'Immortel,'" said Pailleron, "is rubbish. It is novel, nothing else. One doesn't go to a novelist for facts, but for romance, and 'L'Immortel' is nothing else. It is easy to understand Daudet's attitude. He is piqued at not having been received with open arms, and goes about saying: 'The Academy. I never wanted to belong to it.' I like Zola's attitude much better. He says frankly, 'I do want to get in.' He sees in his mind's eye the immense impetus that his election to the Academy would give to the sale of his books, and that is why he is so persistent."

I was interested with Pailleron's remark about the stigma attaching to bankruptcy in France. It is indeed looked upon as a hopeless disgrace. There are many cases of suicide every year in France amongst traders who think that to file a petition is to dishonour themselves and their families for ever. And bankruptcy applies only to

MONSIEUR JULES CLARETIE,
of the French Academy, Manager of the Théatre Française, Poet.

commercial people. The "gentleman" or the professional man cannot be made or make himself a bankrupt. I remember being told by a noted French journalist that one day as he was walking over the Pont-Neuf with a big Parisian tradesman, the latter pointed to the river and said: "If ever I had to dishonour my signature, that is the jump I should take."

We look on things differently in England and so cannot perhaps readily understand why Dumas and Balzac should have been considered too dishonourable to become Academicians.

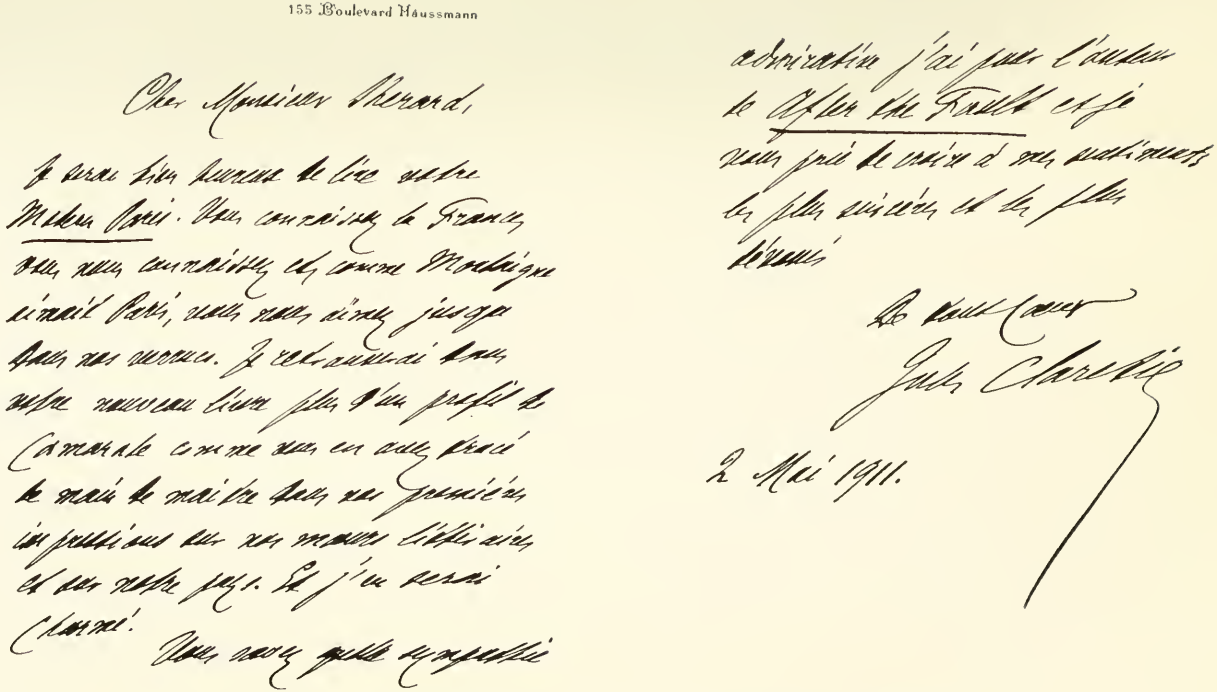
That evening with Claretie at the Français was especially interesting because it was just on the night when Lebargy had made his reappearance after his quarrel with the director. All the actor's friends had collected to give him a rousing welcome, and to show their disapproval of Monsieur Claretie's criticisms. At that time Lebargy had given in his resignation and the director had accepted it, saying that it was impossible ever to satisfy the actor. I do not think I have ever heard more uproar at the Français since the memorable night of the first performance of *Thermidor,* when Coquelin was hooted and insulted by the admirers of Robespierre, coppers being thrown to him from the boxes, and when Clémenceau pronounced the phrase which has endowed French politics with a new term: "The Revolution must be taken *en bloc,*" meaning that no distinctions between the merits or the characters of the different protagonists of that great upheaval could be tolerated.

Lebargy's appearance was greeted with round after round of applause, and furious looks were

cast at the box in which I was sitting between Monsieur Claretie and his gifted wife. At the fall of the curtain on the first act an excitable woman rushed up to our box, which was on the ground floor, and, gesticulating in my face, asked me whether such artists as Lebargy ought to be sent away from the Comédie Française. I smiled benignly, and this seemed to irritate her still further. In the meanwhile Claretie had gone behind the scenes, through a door just outside his *loge*.

The proceedings that night may have been painful to him, but whatever his feelings towards Lebargy were, he paid full homage to his talents. Lebargy played splendidly that night, and on more than one occasion I heard Monsieur Claretie saying: "Very good. Very good indeed, that. Oh, he can act! Oh, he can act very well indeed." And I am not sure that the old gentleman in the skull-cap did not once or twice join in the tumultous applause which rewarded the actor's fine efforts. For my part I seemed quite to have gone over to the anti-Claretie faction, for, carried away by the superb performance, I certainly did applaud Lebargy very vigorously. He quite merits his reputation of being the one actor in Paris who knows how to make love on the stage.

Lebargy derives much of his strength from the fact that he takes himself very seriously. There is no surer road to success than self-confidence. I remember a story which was told me in the green-room of the Théâtre Français some years ago, shortly after he had been decorated with the Legion of Honour. Arriving at Toulon with his company, being booked at the Alcazar to play


155 Boulevard Haussmann

Cher Monsieur Sherard,

Je crois bien inutile de vous vanter
Modern Paris. Vous connaissez la France
aussi bien que moi et comme Montaigne
disait Paris, vous vous dites j'ai ça
dans mes mocassins. Je vous remercie donc
de votre nouveau livre plein d'un parfait de
Canadien comme vous en avez trouvé
le moyen de mêler dans ses premières
impressions sur ses mœurs littéraires
et sur notre pays. Et j'en reste
charmé.

Bien à vous, toute sympathie

admiration j'ai pour l'auteur
de After the Fault et je
vous prie de croire à mes sentiments
les plus cordiaux et les plus
dévoués

De tout cœur
Jules Claretie

2 Mai 1911.

Letter from Monsieur Jules Claretie to Robert Sherard, in which he compliments him on his novel, "After the Fault."

L'Autre Danger, he learned that the manager, finding the play rather short for the tastes of the Toulon public, had arranged to give as a preliminary to the piece an acrobatic performance. The new Knight of the Legion of Honour was horrified. He sent for the manager and told him that it was impossible for a member of the Legion to play on the same stage and in the same performance with mountebanks. The manager tried to persuade him to change his mind, but Lebargy was inflexible. At last the impresario found an effective argument : " Why, look here, Monsieur Lebargy," he cried, " Mounet-Sully, who is an officer of the Legion of Honour, played on this stage—only a week ago—coming on after some Japanese equilibrists."

This seemed to give Lebargy food for reflection. " Well, if Mounet-Sully played here, I can have no objection to do so, and I will, on one condition."

" What is it ? " cried the manager, who had been badly scared at the prospect of having to refund the bookings.

" You must get some brother Knight of the Legion to assure me that I can play on this stage under those conditions without disgracing the order to which I belong."

The manager was able to satisfy the punctilious artist all the more completely, because he succeeded in getting Admiral Bienaimé, the Maritime Prefect of Toulon, who was Grand Officer of the Legion, to come and tell Lebargy that he could play without derogation either to his personal dignity or to the respect due to the Legion.

At the Comédie everybody thought that Le-

bargy had acted very well in standing up for the respectability of the red ribbon.

It occurred to me that Sir Henry Irving, for instance, would have raised no objection, for all his fame, and dignity, to playing on the same evening as some mountebanks, who would, no doubt, have suffered privation if the engagement had been cancelled.

But Sir Henry was, of course, the kindest of men, and as great in qualities of heart as he was great in genius. His disregard for money was characteristic. I remember hearing an anecdote, which he told himself to some friends of mine, which will help one to understand why it was that when he died he left nothing beyond furniture, books and art treasures. On one of his voyages with Ellen Terry and their company to the States he was asked by a certain millionaire philanthropist to give a performance in the saloon in aid of the Sailors' Orphans Fund. Sir Henry declined, saying that he was very anxious to rest, but added that both he and Ellen Terry would gladly subscribe ten guineas each to the fund. The millionaire, however, persisted, and in the end Irving, with Miss Terry and the members of his company, gave a reading of *The Cup*. Having finished his part, he went and sat down with Miss Terry amongst the audience. When the plate came round he put ten guineas into it, and so did Miss Terry. Next to him was seated the millionaire philanthropist. When the plate was put before him he produced, after searching in various pockets, a single sovereign, which with extreme reluctance he added to the collection. "Ah," said Sir Henry, turning

to him, " now I can understand how you Americans get rich."

With reference to Lebargy's scruples, one is to remember that Goethe resigned, or rather provoked his dismissal from the management of the theatre at Weimar because a famous performing dog had been allowed to desecrate its boards. At the same time one knows that Goethe held dogs in horror, which not even the genius of the " Dog of Montargis " could overcome.

CHAPTER VII

Love-making on the Stage—Molière and his Earnings—The Drama To-day—*Chantecler* and Clémenceau—Rostand *père et fils*—The Laurel Wreath to the Greatest Poet—The Status of Actresses—The Count and his Lure—Our Ladies of Millions—The Vicar and the Roulette—Alice Ozy and Victor Hugo—Rival Troubadours—Charles Hugo and his Chop—The Maiden's Prayer—Cardinal Wolsey's Funeral Arrangements—The Actress and the Dangling Legs—The Law's Delay—The Pets' Legacy—Claude Bernard and his Victims—The Vivisector's End—Du Barry, the Coffee and the King—Boudoir and a Box on the Ear—The Vision of Claude Bernard

As a matter of fact, Lebargy makes love too well on the stage. To use a slang expression, he may be said "to give the show away." Women who have seen his ardent wooings, knowing them to be feigned, grow suspicious when similar declarations, accompanied by similar gestures, are made to them by their wooers. They see insincerity even when the lover is as terribly in earnest as Lebargy is terribly in play.

For the rest, nature has done much for the *jeune premier* of the Comédie, and Lebargy himself does the rest. He is famous for the elegance of his attire; his ties and his way of binding them set the fashion to Tout-Paris.

I could not help thinking, as I was watching him that night of his *rentrée* as Marquis de Priola, as he walked on Molière's stage, of the tremendous social and pecuniary advancement which actors and authors have enjoyed since the days of Jean Baptiste Poquelin. We have all heard how the

author of *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* was snubbed at the Court of Versailles, and how Louis XIV. poured balm on his wounds. We have not forgotten either how the priggish Boileau inflicted a reprimand on him because he "degraded" himself by acting the part of Scapin in the play he had written. But it is not so generally known that never at any time in his career did his income from his combined efforts as actor, author and theatrical manager exceed eight hundred pounds a year. There have been dramatic authors in Paris who have left fortunes of millions of francs, while I could name several French actors, who, leaving foreign tours out of the question, earn an annual income of four thousand pounds. When Molière and his troupe were the "servants" of the Duc d'Orleans, and were playing *L'Etourdi* and *Dépit Amoureux*, the ten actors earned only one hundred and eighty pounds apiece in five months. When, the theatre being closed, they accepted an engagement to perform at the country house of some rich financier or great nobleman, a fee of from twenty pounds to forty pounds was considered liberal remuneration for the whole company. Fouquet, however, once paid two hundred pounds, but then Fouquet ever did indulge in a magnificence which was to be fatal to him in the end. The particular play which was rewarded with this sum was *L'Ecole des Maris*.

Playwriting was not remunerative in the days of which I am speaking. Up to the eighteenth century, no play ever brought its author in four hundred pounds. Voltaire made about three hundred pounds with his tedious *Mérope*, and Piron earned

in royalties exactly three hundred and twenty-five pounds from his play, *La Métromanie*. It should be noted that it was then the rule for the author to pay all stage expenses, a custom against which Beaumarchais successfully rebelled.

Nowadays in Paris even the worst "frost," the least successful play—so I have been informed—never brings its author less than six hundred pounds, so that a writer can always count on earning at least that amount if his play is produced. I have heard English dramatic authors say that a successful play ought at the very least to be worth four thousand pounds to its author. Rostand, I suppose, would smile at these figures. His gains are very large indeed. Whether he derives much satisfaction from his enormous earnings, seeing by what commercial means they are obtained, and how far the Rostand of *Les Musardises* is the Rostand of *Chantecler* is another question.

I steadfastly refused to go and see *Chantecler*, and from all I have heard of it I am glad I did so. What revolted me from the first was the way in which the thing was advertised, and the various transparent devices which were resorted to, to stimulate public curiosity and inflate the "boom." One is inclined to set oneself against the modern theory that by force of advertising the public can be made to swallow anything from a cathartic pill to a somniferous play.

One of the sharpest critics of *Chantecler* was that true boulevardier, Monsieur Clémenceau, the maker of ministries, Prime Minister himself for so long a period. He was asked shortly after the first night whether it were true that it was on his advice that

Rostand had cut certain passages out of the particularly tedious third act. "Fichtre non!" said Monsieur Clémenceau, "I gave him no such advice. If I had had any advice to give him of that kind, I should have told him to cut out the whole thing. It was awful, sitting there. Of course it was impossible for me to get up and go out, being so well known, but I did long to go."

In the spring of last year I spent some weeks under the same roof as the Rostands. I was staying at the Hotel Majestic in the Avenue Kléber, the huge caravanserai which was built on the site formerly occupied by Queen Isabella's palace. The family was a constant subject of gossip amongst the hotel guests, and there was a good deal of laughter in the lounge when it was reported on the evening of the first of April that that morning a huge box addressed to M. Maurice Rostand, the poet's eldest son, had been delivered at the poet's apartment. It contained a gigantic laurel wreath, with a card attached on which was written that it was for Maurice, "the greatest poet in France." This was a satire on the supposed pretensions of the young man, who, it is said, thinks that his father is very small poetical beer as compared to himself. Maurice is made the butt of all the boulevard wits; his literary powers are ridiculed, and his self-satisfaction scarified. From what I have seen of the young man, I think he is not being fairly treated. He is not a bit more fatuous than is any lad of his age, who is much talked about as the son of a man of universal fame and high social position. I suppose the critics want to get at the father through the son,

for I imagine Rostand's success has made him the most-hated man in Paris in certain boulevard circles. At the same time it is quite true that Madame Rostand rather invites criticism of Maurice by her constant praise of his genius. While admitting that her husband is a great poet, she declares that even his fame will fade when Maurice comes to his own. If the young fellow does not succeed it will not be for want of maternal encouragement.

While the position of actors in France has vastly improved even within the last twenty-five years—I can remember the outcry which was made when the first ribbon of the Legion of Honour was given to a comedian, and since then how many have not been bestowed amidst general approval amongst players—it is pleasant to note with how much more respect actresses are treated than they used to be. When I first went to Paris, an actress *ipso facto* was considered fair sport, and any man whose purse was sufficiently well garnished thought himself entitled to make advances. I remember an eccentric nobleman, a familiar figure on the boulevards in those days, the Comte de Neuville, who used to boast that there were very few actresses in Paris who could resist his method of courtship. "I visit her in her *loge*," he used to say, "and just before leaving I take a thousand-franc note out of my pocket-book, tear it in half, and lay one half on the lady's toilet-table, telling her that she can come and fetch the other half at my flat any day at such and such an hour. It rarely if ever fails."

A man trying that sort of thing to-day would

very soon be called to order. As in England the actress has now in France a recognised social position, and many of the most *piquantes* ladies of the boulevard stage are, in private life, the staidest of bourgeoises, married, mothers of families, paying their rent regularly and highly esteemed in their *quartiers*.

The present morality of the stage explains the fact that one no longer hears of actresses amassing huge fortunes, such as some of the stage-heroines of the past. It is true that the millionaire women of the theatrical world, in the days to which I am referring, were distinguished less for their histrionic talents than for their power of subjugating rich men. Zola's Nana, who was a regular "stick" as an artist, "made good" to the extent of being able to spend forty thousand pounds a year, and Nana was of course drawn from a living prototype.

This reminds me of a woman, beloved by Victor Hugo, an actress of this type, who left an enormous fortune.

I suppose that few people have visited Père-Lachaise without noticing a very pompous monument, which looks like a Greek temple, with six black porphyry columns, and ornamented with statues. Under this monument repose the mortal remains of the lady to whom I refer. Her real name was Caroline Pilloy; on the stage she was known afterwards as Alice Ozy, and it was she who initiated the late Duc d'Aumale in the roses and raptures of which Swinburne wrote. She made her debut on the stage of the Variétés in 1840, but acting was only a "side line" with her, and when she died she left a fortune of several millions

of francs. By her will she bequeathed this large sum to the Society of Authors. Her family opposed the will and a lawsuit was the consequence, a lawsuit which, seventeen years after the lady's death, is still going on.

Her life had been a sinful one, but after her death the Church pardoned her, because she had made a good use of her ill-gotten gains in her lifetime, and a splendid funeral was hers.

Which reminds me of a pretty young American woman who visited Monte Carlo. Being a very wealthy woman, she naturally won largely at the tables—for at Monte Carlo, as elsewhere, money draws money. On her return home to her beautiful chateau in Hertfordshire she told the vicar of the parish on his first call at K—— House that she had been at Monte Carlo and had been gaming at the tables. "Ah, that," said the parson, "was very wrong indeed of you, Mrs O——." "Yes," she said, "I did it, and I have brought every halfpenny of my winnings home for your church." So saying, she pressed into the reverend gentleman's hands a large wad of blue French banknotes. "Ah, that," said the parson, "is very good indeed of you, Mrs O——." Nor was he ever again heard to speak of the sinfulness of playing at roulette. The Church is very lenient to sinners, provided they "make good." One remembers the old cocotte in Zola's "Nana" who is found playing the Lady Bountiful down in a remote country place, worshipped by the poor, saluted by the mayor, and quoted by the village *curé* as a model of what a woman should be.

I remember myself the respect with which a

couple were treated whom I found living at Auvers-sur-Oise, when I first took a cottage there. They were the most important people in the place and everybody, including the priest, showed them the greatest deference. Monsieur and Madame X. were the real leaders of society in that district. I learned very shortly after my arrival that Madame X. was *tenancière* of a house with a big number in Paris, and Monsieur X.—well the less said about his social position the better.

Alice Ozy, though for the best part of the half of a century she had been a person of no morality, had at least made good. She had made very good indeed, and died a multi-millionaire. And no doubt little girls who accompany their parents to Père-Lachaise on the Day of the Dead point to her magnificent monument and ask their mammas who and what the good lady was who lies under a tomb so magnificent. No doubt also mamma, for morality's sake, bids the child hold her tongue and look elsewhere, adding that the woman buried there was good-for-nothing, *une propre-à-rien*, while at the same time she wonders what women like Alice Ozy possessed different from other women to enable them to live in great luxury and after death to be enshrined with such splendour.

Apropos of splendid tombs, I have often admired the assurance with which Cardinal Wolsey, in *King Henry VIII.*, after informing Cromwell that he has nothing left in the world except his reputation and the clothes in which he stands up, goes on to say that after his death, "when he is laid in dull, cold marble," he desires such and such things to be done. I suppose circumstances were different in

the Middle Ages, or perhaps the Cardinal belonged to a burial society which provided members with marble tombs, but from a business point of view it would seem rather presumptuous for a man with no assets except his suit and his good name to expect to be buried in marble. One can imagine the look of a Peckham undertaker if one asked him to provide such a monument for a deceased cleric, adding that the reverend gentleman had left no estate beyond a suit of canonicals and an exceptionally good character. But, as I have remarked, no doubt things were different in the Middle Ages, and again of course Wolsey's vestments, heavily embroidered, no doubt, may have been of some value.

Alice Ozy died in 1893. I remember often to have seen her in Paris many years previously, when she was pointed out to me as one of the many women whom Victor Hugo had loved. I believe he had entertained a great affection for her as long back as 1847, at a time when he was a very great man indeed. Alice was then on the stage, famous rather for her beauty than for her talents, like other actresses of whom one has occasionally heard, and Hugo, to get into her good graces, promised to give her a part in *Le Roi s'amuse* as soon as ever it should be possible to put that piece on the stage again. This eventuality did not occur until about thirty years later—under the Third Republic. Perhaps Alice Ozy had some presentiment that her admirer's guerdon was not very much, at anyrate it does not seem that she favoured Hugo to any extent. It is true she wrote him some very enthusiastic letters, explaining in the postscript to

one of them that they were not to be read as addressed to a man, but to a "demi-god," but I never heard that the affair went beyond inflammatory epistles. The story was that Hugo's son, Charles—the one who made such a very bad translation of Shakespeare—cut his father out the very first time he met the fair Alice. Charles fell violently in love with her and wrote some rather good verses to her, which were recently unearthed and given to the world by Monsieur Loviot. Victor Hugo on his side tried his best to woo her with poetry and composed some very pretty things in her honour. The spectacle of the poetical rivalry between father and son for the favours of the same woman was one of the literary curiosities of the forties in Paris, but though, of course, the elder man "delivered the goods" in a style vastly superior to his son, it was the younger and better-looking man who won the laurel, or shall we say the orange-flower wreath. Charles gained the love of Alice and, wanting to look smart so as to do honour to his lady-love, went in so extensively for clean linen that his washing bills became very heavy. So then his father cut down the menu of his luncheon. Charles had been in the habit of having a chop in addition to other dishes at his *déjeuner*. This chop was suppressed by Victor Hugo's orders, so as to balance Charles's account. It is related that one day when he asked Alice what he could do to please her, she whispered in his ear: "Let poor Charlie have his breakfast chop once more."

Alice Ozy began by speaking of Victor Hugo as a "demi-god." However, after reading certain re-

marks about her which appear in " Choses Vues " she described him as " that sublime *canaille*."

She was a woman who was greatly loved. Francis Gribble might direct his attention to her, or perhaps has already done so. Théophile Gautier loved her and sketched her portrait ; Chasseriau, whose best work was destroyed when the Cour de Casation was burned to the ground by the Commune, used her charming features in many of his most beautiful pictures. He was passionately attached to her, and she seems to have made him suffer a great deal. One hears of his slashing one of his portraits of her into ribbons one day after she had visited his studio and had given him a piece of her mind. But she seems to have attracted the love of all classes. One hears of a *billet-doux* which was once sent to her dressing-room by a working man, who wrote : " I am but a poor workman, but I love you, mademoiselle, as though I were a millionaire. . . . If my letter gives you any wish to know me and to respond to my flame, raise your eyes to the gallery, when you come upon the stage, and you will see my legs hanging over the balustrade."

It appears that Alice Ozy did not raise her eyes to the gallery, and that the man who was sitting with his legs hanging out was promptly removed by the staff. Alice Ozy was " out for " something more remunerative than sentimental love, and that is how she came to be buried under six black porphyry columns, ornamented with statues.

Harking back to the Peckham undertaker, to whom I allude above, I am of opinion that if such a proposition had been laid before him he would have said : " Well, under the circumstances, all I can

suggest is, that the family better get the reverend gent. buried by the parish."

It may sincerely be hoped that none of the young women who admire Mademoiselle Pilloy's splendid monument in Père-Lachaise feel prompted to follow her example. Millions do not lie that way except in the very rarest cases. *Ne faict ce tour qui veult.* As a matter of fact, the percentage of those who survive this career for twenty-five years without falling into the lowest conditions of life is very small indeed. Some years ago there was drawn up at the Paris Central Police Office a table giving the results of inquiries made into the condition of one hundred ladies of gallantry who had entered their lives as such a quarter of a century previously. It is an edifying paper: Of the hundred *petites dames* there were:

Living in the same way	8
Died prematurely of consumption, etc.	8
In service with former friends	13
Criminals (under supervision)	6
As companions to younger women	8
Charwomen	6
Pedicures or depilators	3
Letting out chairs	2
Old clothes women	9
Gone to America	4
Retired to the country with money	3
Married rich foreigners and abroad	2
Married to shopkeepers in France	2
Trading as a fortune teller	1
In lunatic asylums	6
Committed suicide from poverty	5
Committed suicide from love	1
Murdered	13
	100

The case of the Pilloy family *v.* The Society of Authors seems to promise to rival the famous case of Jarndyce *v.* Jarndyce.

The law's delay, though perhaps less scandalous than in England, is the painful experience of French suitors also.

The other day—that is to say, on 14th June 1910—was finally settled by Presidential decree a legacy case which had been before the courts for eleven years.

A certain Madame Allègre, who died at Hyères on 7th December 1899, had left by her will a sum of eighty pounds to the Society for the Protection of Animals, on condition that her dog Pataud (the same name as that of the *Chantecler* canine) and her cat Raton should be taken care of until their demise. Madame Allègre's family objected most strongly to this legacy and commenced proceedings against the executor of the will to have it put aside. As I have said, these proceedings lasted nearly eleven years. The dog and the cat's inheritance occupied the attention of the highest officials of the State. The Prefect of the Seine gave administrative opinion on the case, and seven years after the suit had been begun a decree was issued by the Minister of Agriculture. The Council of State handed down a decision, and finally in June of last year a decree signed by Monsieur Fallières, and countersigned by Monsieur Ruau, Minister of Agriculture, authorised the Society for the Protection of Animals to accept Madame Allègre's legacy on behalf of the dog Pataud, and Raton, the cat, subject to the conditions thereunto attached.

But Pataud has long since gone where all good dogs go when they die, and the sunny tiles of the Hyères villas know Raton no more. One must hope that they have rejoined the mistress who loved them.

When one reads of the horrors of vivisection one cannot blame as foolish, legacies which provide protection and maintenance for faithful pets after their owner's death.

The question of vivisection is never discussed before me without my thinking of a story which is told of Claude Bernard, the great physiologist, one of the most illustrious representatives of experimental science of the latter part of the nineteenth century. Claude Bernard was a great vivisector, and I am afraid it must be admitted that several of his important discoveries resulted from these experiments. He always had a number of wretched dogs in waiting for him in the cellars of the Ecole de Médecine. One day a strongly-worded remonstrance reached him from people living near the college, who declared that the continuous barking which was kept up by the dogs all night disturbed their sleep and that the nuisance must be stopped at once.

"All right," said the *savant*. "There shall be no more complaints on that score."

The next night not a whimper proceeded from those cellars of the Ecole de Médecine, which for those poor dogs were the ante-rooms to the cruellest of torture-chambers.

The dogs had not been destroyed nor sent away. The great *savant* had performed on each poor brute a simple surgical operation, a

severance of the vocal chords, which had rendered it dumb.

If anyone doubt—as Daudet used to maintain in conversations with me—that Divine justice reaches men on this earth also, the story of Claude Bernard's last hours may cause him to reflect.

Monsieur de Goncourt, who knew the great, but cruel, man notes in his diary :

"In the delirium which preceded his agony, Claude Bernard kept repeating one single word, *Foutu ! foutu !*"

The word is a coarse, slang word, very common in France and of some antiquity, though it is not to be found in polite dictionaries. It is the past participle of the verb *foutre*, which means to hurl violently, to chuck. *Foutu*, as Bernard used it, meant "Done for," "Hopelessly lost," "Overboard." The expression, *foutre le camp*, is a coarse way of saying, "to go away," "to get out." Literally it can be translated, "to chuck one the open space"—*i.e.* "to get out of the way," "to disappear."

It was in use in the eighteenth century, and one has not forgotten how on a celebrated occasion, when the du Barry was with Louis XV. in her boudoir, and the King was heating some coffee for his mistress, she shouted out, seeing the coffee boiling over : "France, France, ton café fout le camp" (France, France, thy coffee is taking its hook)—an incident which is frequently quoted as showing the utter want of dignity which characterised the relations between Louis XV. and his paramour.

Apropos of the word boudoir, it should be noted

that it is not polite to speak to a Frenchwoman of any room of hers by this designation. I have often heard English people use the expression when speaking in Paris, and it is always resented as a familiarity. I presume that for a long time past the word has been exclusively reserved to describe the private apartment of women who are not spoken of in polite society. I have heard of a dear old gentleman, an English nobleman, who got a box on the ears from a French lady to whom in absolute innocence of heart and ignorance of the nuance which now shades the word, had asked her if she would be so kind as to show him her boudoir.

It would appear from de Goncourt's statement that the approach of death distressed and frightened Bernard terribly. His "Lost! lost! lost!" seems to show this. He died comparatively young for a great physician to whom no secrets of hygiene can have been hidden, for he was but sixty-five at his death. Perhaps in his delirium he fancied that once he had passed through the gloomy portals all the victims of his career would come, a fearful, howling, menacing, mutilated pack, tearing towards him with glaring eyes and dripping jaws. He would flee in mad terror, pursued, on and on, for ever across the shadowy fields, deafened with the cries, the cries he knew so well from laboratory days.

There are poisons for the mind as there are poisons for the body, and the torture of those is not less than the torture of these. During his last hours the wilful Baudelaire repeated but one horrid word. It was all that art and fancy and the æsthetic joys of life had left him as the summing-up, and result of life and his final verdict upon it.

CHAPTER VIII

"Qui Trop Etreint"—*In Profundis*—A Thieves' Lodging-house—Maman Grègoire and Mademoiselle Léa—A Cynical Doctor—The Science of Self-poisoning—Too Much of a Good Thing—The Apaches of the rue Broca—Milk for All—On Milk Adulteration—The Speciality of Monsieur L——e—"Working *à la Flotte*"—A Philological Intermezzo—Ruses de Femme—Bibi-la-Purée—Magistrates and their Dignity—On the Virtue of French-women—"The Song of the Shirt"—The Anti-Sweating League—What Women earn in Paris—What they should earn—How Paris is traduced—My Passport into the Depths—A Household Removal—"To the Sound of the Wooden Bell"—Mademoiselle Francine's Gratitude—Misdirected Altruism

It is a curious thing about poisons, that an excessive dose is often its own antidote. That is why I never understood why a skilled man like Dr Crippen should have bought five grains of hyoscine, when, for poisoning purposes, he could have had no use for that quantity, which was ten times more than requisite.

This property of poisons was vividly impressed on me one early morning in a low hotel in the Latin Quarter. It was a house in the rue Broca, exclusively occupied by thieves and female outcasts. Journalistic purposes had brought me there as a temporary lodger.

One morning, at about dawn, I was roused from my sleep by the old hag who kept the place. "Monsieur Robert, Monsieur Robert, *mon bon* Monsieur Robert," she cried, "I want you to render me a service. Quick, quick. Mademoiselle Léa has poisoned herself. I have no one to send for

the doctor. I daren't leave my house, or I would go myself. Will you be so good as to dress and run to Dr X——'s in the rue Claude Bernard, quite close here, and bring him back with you. Mademoiselle Léa is not worth the four shoes of a dog, but if she dies the police will come here, and then where will Maman Grègoire be ? "

I went to Dr X——'s and had great difficulty in getting speech with him. When I had explained my mission, he showed much bad temper. " Oh," he said, " I thought from the way you were pounding at my door that something serious had happened. Another Latin Quarter suicide, is it ? Well, as you have aroused me, I suppose I must go. But I don't stir out of the house until I have been paid my fee. Ten francs it will be. Suicide ? Suicide ? What has she taken ? "

I told him that I knew nothing about it, but that something serious must have happened or the old woman would not have sent for him.

The doctor dressed, grumbling all the while, and eyeing me with very evident suspicion. Certainly as an address " *chez la mère Grègoire*, rue Broca " was not one to inspire much confidence. However, as I promptly advanced the ten francs, he became more civil, and in a few minutes we were in the room of the young woman who had tried to commit suicide. She had been driven to despair, it appeared, because a certain Petit Louis, a young *souteneur*, had danced the whole evening at Bullier's with a party known as Maria Mazas (Newgate Moll would be a good rendering of this sobriquet).

" Ah, exactly what I thought," cried the doctor, after he had examined the bottle from which Léa

had drunk the lethal draught. "You have drunk all this laudanum and you expect to be dead."

We found Mademoiselle Léa walking about her room, with old Mother Gregory prostrate in an arm-chair watching her. Other female lodgers, in various degrees of *déshabillé*, were crowding round the door cackling like frightened geese. There was nothing peculiar about the would-be suicide's appearance, except that the iris had shrunk till it was only a little larger than a pin's head.

"Poisons are not things that people with no scientific knowledge should play with," continued the doctor, getting grumpier and grumpier, as though the fact that the girl had escaped death was a great grievance. "What do you think we go to the School of Medicine for? It's to learn about these things. *You* don't know anything about them. It isn't as easy as you seem to fancy to commit suicide. You have to know about these things. There is a certain dose which kills, a bigger dose which only makes you very sick and ill. One can have too much of a good thing, you know. You have taken quite twice as much as would have killed you, and now you're going to be sick and ill, very, very. And serve you right for your cheek in using drugs about which you know nothing. It's always the same story with you Latin Quarter girls. You take poisons without knowing anything about the right quantity to take and then you send for me when I'm fast asleep and bring me out on cold mornings, just for nothing. Keep the girl walking up and down," he added, turning to Mother Gregory, "and give her plenty of black

coffee to drink. She'll be very sick pretty soon, and serve her right."

Then he crushed his soft felt hat on to his head and rushed out of the room, elbowing his way very unceremoniously through the crowd of women who were cackling round the door.

This doctor was very disagreeable, but at any-rate he had answered my summons. I found a difference in England once, under somewhat similar circumstances. One night the landlady of some lodgings I was staying at in Chelsea came and asked me to go out and find a doctor for a lady who had been taken very ill. The landlady had no physician of her own in the neighbourhood, as she had only quite recently taken her house. She gave me the addresses of one or two medical men in the neighbourhood, and I sallied out on my errand. I could not induce a single doctor, in spite of all my eloquence of pleading through their speaking-tubes, to get out of bed and come. I rang at six doors that night, and in each case was told gruffly that the party was no patient of the doctor in question and that I must go elsewhere. Finally a policeman, to whom I explained matters, went for the district police-surgeon.

During my short stay under the roof of old Mother Gregory in the rue Broca I gained much insight into the habits and practices of the lower French criminals. I must say at once that personally I had no complaint to make about their conduct towards me. It was understood amongst the lodgers in that hotel that "Monsieur Robert" (which was the name by which I was known) was an Englishman who had got into trouble at home,

and wanted to keep quiet. I was free with my money; I paid no court to any of the donahs, and was always ready to advise any *costaud* (tough) who might be in a quandary. And there was another reason also, of which more anon.

They were a very bad set of fellows, the gentlemen of the house. Many of their evil deeds were done from pure mischief. They were the Apaches of twenty years ago. One night I was awakened by a crowd of them rushing into my bedroom dragging after them one of those huge cans of milk (three or four feet high), which, filled with milk, are deposited by the milk-carts outside the milk-shops in Paris in the early morning. The fellows had stolen one of these cans from an adjoining *crèmerie*, and had brought it back in triumph to the house. I asked them what they wanted, and they said that everybody in the hotel was to have milk to wash in, and so saying, they emptied my water-jug and filled it and other utensils in the room with the stolen fluid. It appears that they went all over the house, doing the same in each room, and finally, having filled the can with ordures, took it back and placed it where they had found it, outside the milk-dealer's shop, so that when he took it in in the morning and opened it, a disagreeable surprise should await him.

That evening in Mother Gregory's parlour I expostulated with the head of the gang, the Petit Louis to whom I have made reference, on the wasteful folly of what they had done. I said I could understand crime for profit—to a certain extent—but that to run a serious risk for such a fool's game seemed very unwise indeed.

I was told not to preach sermons, but to consider

that the milk-seller was an old fraud who watered his milk and who richly deserved punishment. "And it is we," added Petit Louis, "who are the justiciaries and avengers of the rue Broca quarter."

Under these circumstances I did not feel called upon to expostulate any further, because I have always felt that no punishment can be severe enough for the mean rascals who adulterate milk. When I was making my investigations into the conditions of child-life amongst the poor in England, I came upon facts of an appalling nature in connection with this kind of fraud, and learned that hecatombs of babies are sacrificed annually to the greed of the adulterators.

There was recently published in Paris, as a historical curiosity, a decree issued in 1481 by Jacques de Tourzel, seigneur of the town of Ambert in the Puy-de-Dome, for the repression of the adulteration of milk and other produce brought into market by the peasants of the surrounding district, against which the citizens of the town had complained to their lord.

"A funnel" (so ran the command of Jacques de Tourzel), "shall be placed in the mouth of any man or woman convicted of having sold watered milk, and the said watered milk shall be poured down the funnel until such time as a doctor or surgeon barber shall say and declare that the culprit cannot be made to swallow any more without danger of death."

The penalties edicted by this seigneur against people selling adulterated butter or rotten eggs were, if not so severe, of a most unpleasant nature.

"Any man or woman having sold butter containing turnip mash, or sand or anything of a similar nature shall be seized and carefully bound to our pillory at Pontel. Then the said butter shall be crushed down upon his head, and shall remain

there until the sun shall have melted it all. Dogs are to be allowed to come up and lick the butter from the culprits and the common people are to be allowed to insult the culprits with such words of abuse as they please, provided always that such words of abuse do not offend God, or the king or others.

"And should the weather be such and the sun not hot enough for the butter to melt, the said delinquent shall be exposed in the big hall of the gaol to a fine, fat, big fire, where each and sundry can come and look at him.

"Any man or woman convicted of having sold rotten eggs shall be bodily seized and exposed at our pillory of Pontel. And the said rotten eggs shall be abandoned to the children, who, as a pleasing pastime, will have good sport in throwing them at the culprit's head or on his clothes, and make people laugh. But they are not to be allowed to throw any other kind of filth."

We ought to have a few legislators like my lord of Tourzel in these adulterating days.

One of the worst fellows in the gang of the hotel in the rue Broca was a strong, big fellow called L——e. He is at present employed by the Prefecture of Police as an "indicator" or "copper's nark," so I must not give his name. While residing at the hotel where I met him his speciality was to waylay people at night on the quays and bridges of the Seine, to garrote and rob them, and afterwards to throw them into the river. This speciality is known in French criminal circles as "working *à la flotte*." *La flotte* means the river.

L——e said his trade was a pure lottery. Sometimes a client proved to be very remunerative, sometimes there was little or nothing to repay him for his time and trouble. He told me that one old gentleman whom he had pitched into the Seine over the Pont du Change, and who had fought like a wild cat, had yielded only fourteen francs, or

eleven shillings and twopence halfpenny. At the same time it was understood that L——e did not always work for profit. He had a liking for his trade, and it was currently reported in the rue Broca circles that it was he who was responsible for the disappearance of a miserable female outcast called *la Bretonne*, who used to be seen night after night at the little coffee-stall on the Pont St Michel, which was known as the Café of the Damp Feet. La Bretonne had never injured anybody, and the only reason why she was pitched into the river, where her body was afterwards found, was that L——e wanted to keep his hand in.

L——e afterwards reformed his ways and got employment as a police spy. Then he got into trouble for stealing bicycles, but again reformed, and, as I understand, is now drawing pay by results from the detective office. His wide experiences as a criminal himself and his acquaintanceships in the criminal classes of Paris make him a useful assistant, and the five francs he gets for each "indication" is doubtless well earned.

During my visits to the rue Broca I enriched my French vocabulary with a great number of slang words descriptive of the varieties of criminals. For the ordinary thief—who does not specialise—there are a great number of terms. Here are some of them:

Attristé, Atrimois, Alpion, Ami (?), Arcasien, Aigle (?), Aiglon, Broquilleur, Billardier, Avale-tout-cru, Cagou, Canonnier, Careur, Caroubleur, Charbon, Chene, Corbeau, Courtier, Droguiste, Ermite, Enfant de la matte, Effaroucheur, Drogueur, *Défardeur*, Detourneur, Doubleur, Compagnon de la pince et du croc, Agrincheur, Grinche, Argotier, Atrimeur, Carabin de

la comète, Escarpe, Vautour, Vendangeur, Raton, Tire-laine, Poix, Policeur, Pilote, Messie franc, Mangeur de la choux, Picpocket, Mastaroufleur, Main, La haute pégre, Pégriot, Locandier, Limousineur, Lézard, Jardinier, Joncheur, Leveur, Gribchisseur, Grincheur, Goupineur, Grinche, Grincheux, Fil de soie, Instruit, Hibou, Haricot, Gras doublier, *Esquinteur*, *Faucheur*, Fourline, Fourlineur, Esbrouffeur, *Endormeur*.

These terms, as I have said, refer to thieves in general, not to specialists in crime. Yet the four words in the above list which I have put in italics convey a more sinister meaning than that of thief alone. An *endormeur* is a man "who sends others to sleep," a *faucheur* is a man "who cuts down with a scythe," an *esquinteur* is one "who smashes you up," while most sinister of all is the word *défardeur*, the man "who takes the colour out of people's cheeks."

L——e did not pass amongst his associates as a *défardeur*, nor did I ever hear applied to him any of the terms by which the criminals of Paris designate professional murderers. Murder in the mind of the French wrong-doer must produce bloodshed to merit that extreme term. There must be *du raisiné sur le trimard* (blood on the road) after he has passed by. L——e was simply spoken of as a man who worked *à la flotte*. He was neither a *sonneur* (a man who kills by pounding his victim's head against the pavement), nor a *surineur*, nor a *chourineur*, nor a *saigneur*, simple or *à la musique*, nor a *scionneur* (men who murder with knives), nor even a *butteur* (a man who kills by butting his head into the stomach of his victim). He was a simple riverside worker. *Il travaillait à la flotte.*

Although I sedulously avoided the society of the

ladies who lived in the rue Broca hotel, I could not but learn much about their modes of life. Old Mother Gregory in return for a glass or two of her poisonous absinthe would tell me endless stories about her female lodgers and the various ways in which they preyed upon society. Mademoiselle Léa, for instance, specialised as the *midinette*, that is to say that at noon she used to walk out in the streets, attired like a dressmaker's girl, in a shabby little black gown, on which white threads had been copiously scattered. The threads were put there so as to make believe she had just left her sewing. Thus dressed she looked like some little *couturière* who had quitted her workshop for a breath of air, and in this incarnation attracted the attention of men who would have shrunk in horror from her in her ordinary capacity. The Maria Mazas to whom reference has been made, and who had earned her sobriquet by the fact that every man who had fallen in love with her had ended sooner or later in Mazas gaol, specialised as a widow. Dressed in deep mourning, with a heavy crape veil half hiding her features, she used to walk on the boulevard St Michel looking for a comforter, and, as Mother Gregory said: "It is extraordinary how many consolers offered themselves, that is until the gaff was blown."

It was at the rue Broca, by the way, that I first made the acquaintance of that strange outcast, Bibi-la-Purée, whose death I described in my "Twenty Years in Paris." He used to do small services for the lodgers, run errands for them, black their boots, and provide them at the lowest rates, consistent with a good article, with the

umbrellas which he used to steal in the various *cafés* of the Latin Quarter to which he could gain access. His real name was André Salis, and he was particularly proud of being related to that Abbé Salis who figured in the Tichborne trial. It was reported of him in the *quartier* that he was a police spy, a *friquet, grand meudon, roussi, cabestan, bourrique, prétexte, chandelle, indicateur, correcteur, casserole, mouche, mouchard, émargeur, railleux* or *allumeur,* but the fact that he was admitted to the society which I have described disposed in my mind of that accusation.

What seemed to satisfy the criminals amongst whom he moved that he was not to be regarded with suspicion was the fact that whenever he got into trouble for begging or for insulting the police (a very grave offence in France), and was brought before the magistrates of Police Correctionnelle, these gentlemen never failed to "salt" him—that is to say, to punish him with due severity. Now one of the perquisites of the police spy, or *indicateur,* is that if he ever comes before the police magistrates the police authorities secretly recommend him to mercy and he gets off very lightly.

Insulting the police is, as I have said, a very serious offence in France. It is called *outrages aux agents,* and is punishable with up to twelve months' imprisonment. To insult a police magistrate in the exercise of his functions is even a much graver offence, and can be punished with a heavy fine and imprisonment not exceeding five years, which is the maximum allotted to the crime of pocket-picking also.

There is a saying in France that a convicted man

is allowed twenty-four hours in which to curse his judges, but anybody attempting such a thing in one of the Paris police courts would have speedy reason to regret it. Conviction follows the offence with lightning rapidity. I once saw a man sentenced to a week's imprisonment for some trivial offence. He was very angry at being convicted, and on rising to leave the court told the usher to supply "those men on the bench with a bunch of carrots each." The presiding magistrate at once ordered the guards to "bring that man to the feet of the tribunal." The Government attorney rose and said: "I demand the application of the law," and the court promptly added twelve months to the prisoner's sentence. In some cases, where the magistrates are amiably disposed, an opportunity is given to the offender to retract his words. On another occasion when I was in one of the Chambers of Correctional Police, a man who had been convicted informed the magistrates that they might all go to ——. The presiding magistrate warned him of the consequences of speaking in that way. The man replied, "Gentlemen, you may all go to——." "For the last time," said the president, "I advise you to reflect. You have yet time to withdraw your words. The alternative will be a very serious matter for you." "Gentlemen," repeated the prisoner, speaking slowly and spacing out his words with great deliberation, "You . . . may . . . all . . . go . . . to . . . ——." The attorney demanded the application of the law, the court deliberated, and a minute or two later judgment was read by which the culprit, convicted of having "reiteratively" insulted magistrates in the exer-

cise of their functions, was sentenced to four years' imprisonment.

I could not help thinking of the difference between English and French law in this respect, when the other day I was in a borough police court in the Midlands. A woman had been sentenced to a few days for drunkenness, and was sitting waiting to be taken downstairs on a bench near the dock. During the whole time that she remained there she did not cease one moment from abusing and insulting the bench. " A fine lot of pigs you are. You are a nice lot of pigs," was her refrain. In France she would have received five years for this conduct. In England all that happened was that the gaoler told her to " shut your mouth and don't make so much noise, can't you ? "

All magistrates in France do not take advantage of the law to avenge their outraged dignity. There was a very good fellow who used to preside at the Ninth Chamber in Paris. I heard a prisoner once call him a blackguard. The magistrate, instead of ordering the guards to bring him " to the feet of the tribunal," cried out : " No, no. It's you who are a blackguard and a very dirty fellow. There, guards, take him away."

I often thought while I was staying in the rue Broca what a good thing it would be for " young men seeing life " to come and spend a few days under Mother Gregory's roof. How their eyes would be opened to the females with whom vice prompts them to associate, and how they would understand the horror and contempt with which these women regard them. The purchaser of venal love has in Paris amongst these women one

designation, a term of contempt, and that is *michet*. This word is a corruption of Michel, from Gros Michel, which means a fool, a "juggins," a "country bumpkin." The lover who is not generous, or is poor, is called a *micheton*; if he be very unsatisfactory from the financial point of view he is described as a *michet en carton*. The *michet* is *ipso facto* hated and despised. The woman looks upon him as her enemy, as her natural prey.

When one looks into the conditions under which poor workgirls have to live in Paris one wonders not at the number of women who go wrong but at the extraordinary number of girls who heroically resist evil, and under the greatest difficulties lead honourable lives. The sweating of women that is practised in Paris is more cruel perhaps and more extended than in any city that I know of, except perhaps New York. It is only quite recently, moreover, that any attempt to remedy this state of things has been made. The honour of this initiative is due to Madame Cladie Bonnardelle, who has lately founded in Paris, with offices at 6 rue du Val-de Grace, The League of the Anti-Sweating System.

"The Song of the Shirt" is sung dismally in hundreds of Parisian garrets. Workgirls of average skill who work on body-linen cannot earn more in a working day of ten hours than from one shilling to one shilling and sixpence. Sewing on hooks, hemming dusters and inferior work of that kind cannot under present conditions bring the poor slave in more than from tenpence down to eightpence halfpenny for ten hours' work. There are

three months in the year when absolutely no work is given out, so that the girl has to save out of her miserable wages enough to keep her during the dead season. She has her rent to pay, and the very heavy item of light.

A very skilled needlewoman working on fine linen may earn one shilling and tenpence to two shillings a day for ten hours' work.

The women who sew ready-made clothing earn as a maximum one shilling and sevenpence halfpenny per diem, but there are many girls working at this trade who never earn more for ten hours' work than one shilling and twopence halfpenny. The dead season in the ready-made clothing industry lasts four or five months.

To understand the significance of these figures one should glance at what Madame Derouet, who is the lady president of the Syndicate of Needlewomen working at home, sets down as the minimum expenditure on which a single woman living alone in Paris can exist without danger to her health :

Rent of one room . . .	Fr. 180
Food (from 1/-½d. to 1/2½d. per diem) .	475–548
Heating and Light . . .	70
Expenses connected with her work .	100
Washing	63
Total	Fr. 888 or 961

That is to say, in English money, that a single woman *must* spend from thirty-five pounds to thirty-eight pounds per annum on her mere existence in Paris. Madame Derouet's budget makes no allowance for any other expenses, such as arise in the case of illness, for omnibus fares, or for the hire-

purchase of a sewing machine. Pleasures of any kind, even the daily halfpenny for a newspaper, are not allowed for. A woman, even to live in the meagre way described, ought to earn, if she is working on linen, a minimum of three shillings and a halfpenny per diem for three hundred days, while a girl employed in the ready-made clothing line ought to be able to earn three shillings and twopence halfpenny. What she actually does earn nowadays in Paris we have seen above.

And this makes me say that it is greatly to the credit of Frenchwomen that in general their lives are chaste and virtuous. I think it indisputable that the average of morality amongst women is higher in France than, perhaps, in any other country in the world except Ireland, and nothing more enangers the friends of France than the extraordinary notion generally prevailing abroad that Paris is a city of debauch. It is, taking it all round, a much more decent-lived city than Brussels, or Berlin, or London, to say nothing of St Petersburg, Buda-Pesth, New York, Warsaw or Stockholm. If the French were hypocritical and hid their vices, or attached more significance to the *bagatelles* of existence, Paris would rank as the metropolis of dull decorum.

One of the reasons why my presence was tolerated in the house in the rue Broca was that I had the reputation of being *un frère*, *un bon zig*, and this reputation I had gained in the easy way in which most reputations are won. One night as I was passing along the rue des Ecoles, on my way home to the rue de la Sorbonne, I heard a call from a window on the second floor of the house in front

of which I was walking. I looked up and said: "Well, what is it?" It was a girl who had hailed me. "I want to move my things out of this hotel," she explained, "to the sound of the wooden bell." "What we in England call a moonlight flitting?" I said. "That's just it," she answered. "Now do be a dear and catch what I am going to pitch out of the window. Take it round the corner, and wait till I come out and get it." "Pitch away," I said, and the moment after a huge bundle, tied up in a sheet, which I am afraid may have belonged to the landlord of the *maison meublée*, descended on my head, crushing my top-hat over my eyes.

It appeared afterwards that besides her clothing the young lady had removed the clock off the mantelpiece of her bedroom, and it was this weighty object which had come into contact with my headgear. However, I was able to catch the bundle before it fell to the ground, and, as requested, took it round the corner into a side street. Here two minutes afterwards the young woman joined me. I transferred her property back to her and went on my way. It appeared afterwards that her name was Francine, and that she had very extensive relations amongst the criminal classes on that side of the Seine. She told everybody of the service I had rendered her, and for many years I used to be known amongst the classes I have referred to as *le déménageur de Francine*, "Francine's household remover." It was, it appeared, a title of distinction, and it certainly was a safe-conduct in those *bas fonds* of the Latin Quarter which at the period to which I have referred I

wished to explore. "Oh, he's all right. That's the household remover," would be certainly said by somebody or other, who had recognised me, if on my entrance into some low haunt, anyone resented my presence and wished me to be driven out.

It is fact that I was never once attacked and that nothing was ever stolen from me on any of the occasions when I was in bad company, or sleeping in "crook" houses on the *rive gauche* in Paris. This immunity attracted the attention of the police, and I learned years later, while conversing with the Chef de la Surété in his office, that some inquiries had been made about me, and that, unknown to myself, I had been shadowed on more than one occasion. "We couldn't make it out," he said, "especially you being an Englishman." I then told him about Francine, and he agreed that very possibly it was that that had inspired confidence in me. "Breaking the law," he added, half smiling, half seriously, "is often a passport amongst law-breakers."

It was only then that it occurred to me that the service I had rendered to the young woman in the rue des Ecoles was an act of misdirected altruism. Her landlord's claims had never been considered by me.

CHAPTER IX

In Profundis—The Couple on the Sixth Floor—"The Patti of Pontoise"—The Blue Bird and the Green—The Artist and the Records—Monsieur Eugene Below Stairs—Official Sweating in France—Government Clerks at Twelve Shillings and Fourpence a Week—A Nefarious Industry—Amsterdam revisited—The Poet and his Mysterious Quest—An Anarchist with a Fortune—The Arcana of Literature—The Profits of Infamy—A Student's *Pension de Famille*—Some of the Family—The House of Fatal Influence—The Latin Quarter Hotel—Monsieur et Madame Simon—How to pay Old Debts—A Moonlight Flitting—The Landlord tolls the Bell

If my explorations in the depths of Paris were often unpleasant, and my experiences not unfrequently depressing, I can at least say of them that they were, to me, profoundly interesting. Since those days I have had opportunity to study the criminals of the leisured classes—men and women who never come within the reach of the law, but who in fact constitute a much greater danger to society than such people as Petit Louis, Maria Mazas, Bibi-la-Purée, or even the formidable Monsieur L——e himself—and I must say that from the "human document point of view" my excursions into the depths were infinitely more instructive and in a way less heart-breaking.

The society of which the hotel in the rue Broca was the centre or hub was not exclusively composed of law-breakers. There were people there who worked, and though the nature of their work was not commendable, nor to be approved of by the moralist, they still could claim to be maintaining themselves by their labour.

On the sixth floor of the house, for instance, there lived a middle-aged couple, who at one time had, each in a different way, some success on the music-hall stage. Time had dealt hardly with them: the woman had lost her looks; the man, crippled with rheumatism, was no longer able to strut the stage. But their voices still remained to them, and it was by these, thanks to the gramophone, that they were able to maintain themselves in some comfort.

One afternoon I met the woman on the staircase. She was carrying a heavy box upstairs, and as it was evidently a great strain on her, I offered to take it up to her lodging.

"Oh," she said, "it's Monsieur Robert?"

"Yes," I said, "otherwise known as 'the household remover.' Allow me to exercise my functions on your behalf."

When I had deposited the box on the landing of the sixth floor, the woman asked me into her room to sit down, and proposed a glass of absinthe as a refreshment. She herself, she said, could not join me, as absinthe was bad for her voice, though otherwise, and if she had not to depend on her voice, she would strangle a parrot against any household remover in the country. Strangling a parrot is French argot for drinking a glass of the green poison, absinthe.

"I understood, madame," I said, "that you had left the stage. Do you then still sing, as you say you have to spare your voice?"

"Parbleu!" she said. "How do you fancy I live? Surely you don't rank me with Maria Mazas, or my husband with Petit Louis? My

business is making gramophone records, and I spend five or six hours a day singing into the machine, at a place on the boulevards. It's hard work and poor pay. Imagine that, I who have earned as much as thirty francs a night—one season at Enghien-les-Bains I did even better than that—and that by singing two or at most three songs, have to go on sweating away for four or five hours, bawling into a receiver, at the rate of two francs an hour. But *que voulez-vous* ? One must eat. One does what one can."

"Well," I said, "ten francs a day makes three thousand six hundred and fifty francs a year, so that you don't do badly."

"You talk very childishly," she said, "for a man who is supposed to know what's what. Do you think that there is no dead season in the gramophone world ? I don't make half the amount you say per annum. If I did, do you think that I should be living on a sixth floor in the rue Broca ? "

"And then there is Monsieur, your husband," I said. "No doubt, he——"

"Oh, poor old Eugene. Yes, he does what he can. He might be doing the same as I, but then he will stick to absinthe and his voice is a bit hoarse. So they won't have him for legitimate work, and what he makes by singing is in the cellar."

"In the cellar ? Oh, I see. He sings in one of those Bohemian café-concerts in a *caveau*, or dive."

"Not a bit of it. He sings *des cochonneries*—nasty improper songs for records."

"Is there a trade in that sort of thing ? Is that sort of thing done in Paris ? " I asked.

"Parbleu ! There is a demand for piggishness

in everything. It is a terrible come-down for a man like my husband, who used to make a speciality of tender romances. Why, his most popular song was about a little blue bird. That was when we first met, and I used to feel the water coming to my eyes when he warbled about that blue bird. And now it is all changed. The blue bird has become a green one, a green parrot, and Eugene strangles it, ten or fifteen times a day, though the doctor tells him it is killing him. And as to singing, he is no longer the darling of the ladies of Noisy-le-Sec or Rotrou-les-Eaux, but down in a dark cellar, where the police and the neighbours can't overhear him, he has to sing obscene songs to a machine. A fine finish for an artist."

"But how do they find a market for such records?"

"I can't tell you. There are secrets in every trade. What about the book trade and the photograph trade? Are those proper and clean all through? We don't know and we don't care. One must live, and Eugene gets fifteen francs a day when he works. But there is a long dead season in that branch of the industry, and altogether he don't earn half as much as I do. It's hard on the poor fellow," she continued, "because he used to be very *comme il faut*. He's a man of delicate feelings, and a religious man. Why even to-day he never fails to attend—church, and sings in the choir every Sunday, just to clean his voice, he says.

"Eugene," she added, "was never intended for a Bohemian life. He started his career in the civil service. He was clerk at the Prefecture of X.

But you know what a dog's life is led by an employee of a Prefecture in France. He could not earn enough to keep himself decently clothed, and Eugene has always been a dressy man. He was put on at eight hundred francs per annum (thirty-two pounds). How can a man live on that salary? Yet that is what most of them start at. Start at, and stick to. After he had been working in his office for two years they raised him to forty pounds. There was a clerk in the same Prefecture who had been working steadily for over ten years, and whose salary was fifty-six pounds a year. I know that it is a distinction to be in a Government office, and Eugene quite realised that that was to be taken into consideration. But, after his father died and the home was broken up, he found he could not possibly exist on his salary. Now he had a good voice, and so after a while he got on to the music-hall stage. He did well there, in the sentimental romance line. We fell in love with each other at first sight. That blue bird of his flew straight into my heart. And we got on well together. They called me the Patti and him the Nicolini of Pontoise. But my looks went."

"Oh, madame," I cried.

"Oh yes, I know all about that. My looks went and his absinthe habits crippled him. And so here we are, *au* 'doing wha*sixième*,t I tell you, and glad to do it, because if that resource failed I don't see what could keep the pair of us out of the river with a final appearance on any stage, on the slabs of the Morgue."

That same evening in conversation with my hostess, having referred to what the Patti of

Pontoise had told me about her husband's *métier*, I learned that Maman Grègoire knew all about those clandestine trades to which reference had been made.

"Posing for photographers who make objectionable pictures is always a resource for the clients of this house," said the old woman. "They don't like it, because the pay is very bad, and of course the work isn't pleasant. Some of those studios are draughty and cold, and these ladies and gentlemen like their comforts. They say that it is the hardest way of earning eight shillings per diem that ever was invented. But, as I say, it always is a resource. When I have told them, for instance, that if my rent isn't paid at once they will be sent into the road to see if I am there, and Julot comes out of the back room and says his bit too, they usually go off and pose."

The manufacture and sale of objectionable photographs—how horribly objectionable I will not expound—is a large and prosperous industry on the Continent. The manufacture is mainly carried on in Paris and in Berlin, while Amsterdam is the central market.

Some years ago a friend of mine, one of the most distinguished of French poets, who, as I afterwards learned, had a mania for collecting these pictures, and prided himself on having the finest collection in Europe after that of a well-known millionaire, invited me to accompany him to Amsterdam. He did not tell me what he wanted to go there for. He said it was on an artistic quest, and I imagined he wanted to revisit the splendid picture-gallery there. However, on arriving in the Dutch capital, the mysterious nature of his journey soon im-

pressed itself on me. On the first morning we drove to a bar, and over the counter here the poet held a whispered confabulation with the portly landlord. From the bar we drove to a similar establishment in another part of the town, and here the same thing occurred.

"I may as well tell you," said my friend, "that I have come to see one of the biggest dealers in special photographs in the world. I am interested in this trade. I propose to write about it some day. But there is great difficulty in getting near the man. His address is kept a secret, and one can only approach him by tortuous ways. I had to give that first barman a password. He then gave me this address. Here I had to give another password, and now finally I have got the man's street and number. I am going there now. Would you like to come with me, or does your English prudery—— ?"

"*Homo sum*," I said, "and though I don't think that kind of taste a human one, bestial rather I should call it, I am curious and interested and will go with you."

The house to which we had been sent was a fine residence near one of the canals. The front door was reached by a flight of steps. My friend rang, and, after waiting a long while, rang again. The house seemed unoccupied. All the blinds were down ; not a sound issued from behind the walls. And yet while we were standing there, I had a curious feeling that we were being watched by unseen eyes.

After waiting for fully five minutes, during which time my friend must have rung at least a

dozen times, the door was finally opened. A tall, well-dressed, military-looking man appeared on the threshold, accompanied by two monstrous Danish dogs.

My friend said something to him, a single word—the password, no doubt. The man's face relaxed, and very politely he bade us enter.

"I have to be very careful indeed," he said, "and I have been examining you for some minutes past in a mirror which reflects the landing outside the front door. That is why you were kept waiting so long. You see, about a month ago two very decent-looking men came here and introduced themselves as amateurs. They had got the password pat and gammoned me right up to the hilt. Do you know what they were? They were *envoyés* from the Paris Prefecture of Police. They bought largely a whole valuable collection of pictures, two hundred in the series, our best selling line. Then they went back to Paris and the photographs were examined at headquarters. The men and women who had posed for these pictures were recognised—the series, I should tell you, is one manufactured in Paris—and at once, on various pretexts, the models were arrested. They all belonged to the classes over which the police has a hold, and after their arrest they were given the choice of telling where they had posed for these pictures or of being proceeded against on any one of the numerous charges which the police had against them or was prepared to manufacture. The addresses of the photographers were promptly supplied, and the very next day the police rushed the studios, collared all the negatives and smashed

them up. In consequence the whole of that fine series, for which we had daily customers and which brought us in sixteen pounds a set, was suppressed.

" The business is not what it used to be," said our host, leading us into his office. " And I, for one, have had about enough of it. Our English market, owing to the severity of your judges and the stupid vigilance of your police is practically closed to us. Why, only a few days ago my principal agent was sentenced to penal servitude for handling our goods. They gave him I don't know how many years."

" Bravo, Scotland Yard!" I said.

" My friend doesn't mean what he says," interposed my companion.

" Oh, I think he does," said the dealer, " and I don't mind. I think he is quite in the right. It is a beastly trade, for beastly people. And as I say, I am tired of it. If you had come next month you wouldn't have found me here. I have done with it. I have managed to earn five hundred thousand marks in the business since I started here seven years ago, and that is a fortune which satisfies my ambition. I am going back to Schlesien, and intend to go in for farming. As a pastime I shall breed Danish dogs. If the business had been what it was a year or two ago I might have stayed on. It is very lucrative, and, being myself of the Anarchist persuasion, I delight in encouraging the infamous rich in their degrading vices. But I've done with it now."

The room into which we had been ushered was littered ankle-deep with letters.

" I thought," I said, kicking up a mass of papers,

" that you people formally promised that every communication sent you should be destroyed at the moment the order had been executed."

The man smiled cynically. " If people like to trust such promises that is their own look-out. Not that I personally ever have made use of any of these letters. I have done well enough in the legitimate trade. But undoubtedly a business like this one would put very valuable material into the hands of anyone wanting to engage in fruitful blackmailing. Some of our trade do make a side line by selling customers' letters to professional *maîtres chanteurs*. I never destroyed the letters, simply because it was too much trouble. And then it amuses me to pick up a handful of these missives and by reading them over to strengthen my hatred and contempt of the classes who write to me. Here, would you like a few ? They are curious reading, I can assure you." With these words he stooped down and picking up a handful of letters off the floor and offered them to me.

" *Gott bewahre*," I said, recoiling.

" Oh, I'll have them," cried my friend. " They must be most interesting. I say, look here. There has been a crest on this paper. The writer has tried to scratch it out, but I can recognise it."

" Here are some letters I received this morning," said the dealer, taking some envelopes off his desk. " They come from all parts of the world. This is from Texas, enclosing fifty dollars. Here are two from Paris, and here are several from Russia. The Russians are our best customers, by the way. But Russians, or French, or English, or Americans, they are all the same, all nasty fellows, and my only

regret in leaving this business is not to be able to fleece this kind of people any more."

Before we left his house he had told us many more sad yet interesting things about his trade. One thing that I remember as particularly distressing was that most of the dreadful books which are produced to meet the great demand for vile literature are written by poor old women. I could not help wondering which was sadder to contemplate, the girl sweating over her needle in a cold and draughty garret, or the aged dame bending her grey and unvenerable head over her task of authorship, deliberately intended to poison and corrupt.

"Do these authoresses like their work?" I asked.

"They like what they get for it. Most of them are women who started with high ambitions. They wanted to become a George Sand, a George Eliot, a Currer Bell. It did not 'eventuate'—as the Americans say—and so they take to what is sure pay and regular work. Work, too," he added, "which gratifies their feelings of hatred and revenge against society which ignored and slighted them. That gratification, I repeat to you, sir, is the saving grace of this horrible trade of ours."

I have often wondered whether the man was sincere in his professions or whether he pleaded Anarchist feelings to palliate the infamy of his pursuit. I was well aware of the enormous profits gained in this vile trade. I have heard of booksellers in Paris and London who behind the mask of respectable tradesmen make large incomes by trafficking in secret literature. A famous publisher, since dead in poverty, once showed me a book with

eighteenth-century illustrations which he was to deliver the same day to a customer who had paid six hundred pounds for it. There is a bookseller in Paris whose shop is stocked with guide-books, the Tauchnitz edition, and cheap literary wares of that sort, who frequently during the season makes a turnover of one thousand pounds a week in rare specimens of clandestine books. The eighteenth century in France raised pornography to a fine art, and many of the volumes, illustrated by the greatest contemporary artists, fetch enormous prices. The names of the rich amateurs the world over are known to the trade. In secrecy and silence this ignoble but most lucrative traffic is carried out.

The English publisher to whom I have referred above had formed the ambition to create in England of to-day a school of writers and artists who should produce for his benefit a series of works which might compete in literary and artistic "interest" with the clandestine literature of the eighteenth century in France. To one very distinguished black and white artist he paid a weekly salary of twenty-four pounds to illustrate certain books, but the artist freed himself before he had gone too far. The man's project would have resulted in enormous profits for himself, in the degradation and ruin of his tools. It was a happy thing that he could not find people of talent to listen to his proposals.

A hotel in some ways more sinister than the thieves' lodging-house in the rue Broca was another hotel in the Latin Quarter, which at this time I used to frequent. It was a students' hotel in a small street off the rue des Ecoles. For a short period

I used to take my meals there, and I often reflect, not without uneasiness, that of the five men with whom I used to converse there during table d'hôte not less than three have come to dreadful ends. There was René Leclerc, the poet, who poisoned himself in his lodgings in the rue Claude Bernard, and who became famous after his death. There was Salmon, a young Jewish musician of extraordinary talent, who in a fit of neurasthenia destroyed himself also, and there was the sinister Joseph Aubert, the murderer, who ended his days as a convict under life-sentence in French Guiana. Some houses seem to cast over those who come beneath their roofs a sinister spell of future disaster.

Amongst the *convives* at that drab ordinary was a young doctor of whose conversation I am reminded by the preceding sentence. This man had a theory, which he professed himself able to prove by numerous examples, that not only are there districts where cancer flourishes, but streets and houses. He had a list of houses in Paris of which he declared that at no time was the dread malady totally absent amongst their lodgers.

Another guest was a very stout man called Héroguel, of whom it was reported that he was entitled to style himself Prince Héroguel d'Amiens. He came into much notoriety later on by submitting himself to be experimented upon by a doctor, who undertook to reduce obese people to normal proportions, not by drugs or any regimen, but by the use of the surgical knife. He operated upon the bulky prince, and removed from different parts of his body layers of fat. Héroguel suffered little

or no inconvenience from this operation, for a time at least was left in the enjoyment of a pleasing figure, and became for a period one of the most-talked-of men in Paris.

My patronage of this hotel did not last very long. Possibly unconsciously, I felt the evil influence that emanated from its dingy walls ; perhaps the inward eye noticed the sword that was hanging over the ill-laid table. One night after setting out from my house to go there for dinner, an impulse prompted me to swing round on my heel and hie me elsewhere. Nor did I ever return. Thanks to this I was taught a French proverb which I had not known before. On the fourth day after my defection the landlady of the hotel came bursting into my study, demanding to know why I had given up dining at her house. I told her that I found it more convenient to take my meals at the restaurant. Then she shouted out : " Before one leaves the blacksmith one pays for the horseshoes." I looked at her with surprise. She then thrust a bill into my face, and I remembered that five francs were owing her from me. " Before one leaves the blacksmith one pays for the horseshoes." I copied it out in a fair hand and pinned it to my wall, and have found it a useful axiom in life.

The hotel in question was a typical dingy Parisian eighth-class hotel. Rooms could be hired here for from thirty shillings to two pounds, ten shillings a month. It was mainly inhabited by students, some *en ménage*, others single. These *hôtels meublés* are of all the dwelling-places on earth the most forlorn and comfortless. The dingy

furniture, the verminous bed, the ill-odorous bedding, from which the stained red sack stuffed with feathers is never absent, the cupboard with its panel looking-glass scratched over, the *garniture de cheminée* with the gilt zinc clock green with verdigris, the broken toilet utensils, the *table de nuit* with its top of cracked marble . . . but above all the characteristic, haunting reek of the place, so well described by de Maupassant, the peculiar and persisting fetor of the *maison meublée*.

It was in such a hotel and in such a room that Oscar Wilde breathed his last. "In the worst inn's worst room . . ." Pilgrims from all over the world go to visit the house where he died, the Hotel d'Alsace in the rue des Beaux-Arts, No. 13 (Alsatia, at a No. 13 in the Street of the Fine Arts —coincidences here). The people who keep the place now charge each visitor a franc and show a room as the chamber where the poet died. It is not the room, but one which he occupied until within a fortnight of his death.

Amongst the guests who dined at the table d'hôte in the house of evil influence were a married couple. They were known to me to be married, but it appeared that the landlord held them to be—from their own statement—bound only by the ties of *union libre*. This couple had devised a new way for paying old debts, for settling with the blacksmith for the horseshoes they had had, and in pursuance of their scheme it was necessary for them to pose as living together, having celebrated their wedding only—as the French used to say when there were but nineteen districts in Paris—"before the mayor of the twentieth arrondissement."

For some time previous to the event to be described, they had failed to pay their bill. The landlord and especially the landlady were grumbling sorely. Often at table pointed reminders were addressed to them by host or hostess. "If people paid their bills it would be easier to provide a better table." "It would be a mistaken idea to hold that the house is being run on the same principles as the *Assistance Publique*." "*Pas d'argent, pas de Suisse*" (this while the Swiss cheese was being handed round). And so on.

The *dénouement* came one night. A terrible to-do was heard in the room occupied by the impecunious lovers. The woman was crying, the man was vociferating. Up rushed the landlord. To him the man appealed. "I wish this woman to leave the house at once." "I shall not do so," said the woman. "You have no claim on me." "I have. By moral law I have every claim on you." "Ah," cried the landlord, "but moral law isn't good enough. You are not the man's wife. He is not obliged to keep you here if he does not choose to do so." "And I don't," cried the man. "I am sick and tired of her. I want her to get out. I have asked her to go quietly. There are her things ready packed, and she won't go. If she stays I shall leave and then you must look to her for your bill, as I will not be responsible for her any longer." "You hear what Monsieur says," cried the landlord. "You can't stay here. You have no earthly right to stay here. So if you don't go quietly I shall turn you out." "How am I to do so when that wretch gives me no money? He has received a big cheque this evening and surely he could afford

me a louis or two after all I have been to him. I haven't a *sou* in my pocket. How am I to pay for a cab, to get into another room?" "I have nothing to do with that. I have told you I can't get my cheque cashed till to-morrow. In the meanwhile I refuse to let you stay here. Make what arrangements you like with the landlord, but if you do not leave, I go at once." "If Monsieur wishes," said the landlord, who had pricked up his ears when the words "big cheque" had been pronounced, "I could advance Madame a louis, provided Monsieur will let me put it on his bill." The man nodded, a louis was produced and pocketed by the woman. "And yet, no," she cried, "I cannot leave you. I refuse to go." "We'll soon see about that," cried the hotelkeeper. Then, shouting over the banisters, he called the *garçon* up. When the man had come, he continued: "Now out you go. Here, Jules, catch hold of that trunk, take it downstairs and call a cab. Now, Madame, go quietly if you are wise. If not it is with me you will have to deal. I shall send for the police *en route* for St Lazare prison." With these words he caught up the remainder of the woman's belongings and followed Jules, who was dragging the heavy box down into the hall. A cab was summoned, the crying female was hauled downstairs and bundled into it, her luggage was heaped on the top, the cabman cracked his whip, and the expulsion was completed.

"These women," said the landlord, re-entering the dining-room and rubbing his hands, "are a pest to the Latin Quarter. But for her Monsieur Simon would have paid regularly, I am sure of it."

The next morning Monsieur Simon went out after a copious breakfast—presumably to cash his big cheque—went out and never came back. All his clothes and belongings had been packed up with his wife's things in the big trunk and the other bundles which the landlord had himself carried out of the house. The hotelkeeper had been the unwitting accomplice in this household removal by moonlight. It was his hand which had tolled "the wooden bell." He never forgot the trick that had been played on him. His wife took good care that he should not.

CHAPTER X

Parisian Landlords—Landlords and Landladies I have known—Queen Amelia's Double and the Artist—The *Probloque* and the Parrot—The Parisian Concierge—His Powers, Peculiarities and Perquisites—Major Esterhazy's Concierge—The Major and his Shadow—David C. Murray and Esterhazy—Barbers and their Nobility—The Lady Journalist and the Attic Interview—Myself as Landlord—A Perfumed Tenant—On the Disadvantages of smelling good—A Prison made fragrant—My Landlord at Auvers—A Midnight Rescue—A Murder at Auvers—A Village Pariah—The Incendiary by Love.

In consequence, I suppose, of the dearness of rents, the Parisian landlord is decidedly, as such, an unpopular character. The landlord is not much liked in any part of the world, but in Paris the "lobster"—as he is called in New York—is regarded as the enemy of the poor.

"It's such bad weather outside that one would not even turn one's landlord out of doors" is a common French saying. "I would give five years of my landlord's life if such and such a thing would happen" is another. The landlord figures in literature as "Monsieur Grippe-sou," in argot he is designated as *le probloque*. Legislation is all in his favour, and so is custom.

I cannot say that during my residence in Paris I ever had real reason to complain of the treatment I received at the hands of my various *probloques*. Those belonged to different classes of society. The landlady of the house in the rue de Castiglione, where I first lived—with furniture of my own—in a

garret, was an elderly dame who fancied that she bore a strong resemblance to Queen Amélie, and the easiest way of getting into her good graces was to refer to this. At least so I was told by a Bohemian artist who occupied a garret adjoining mine.

"It never fails," he said. "Last quarter-day I was as usual in arrears, and so, without waiting to be bullied by the concierge, I went round to the rue St Honoré and asked to see *Madame la propriétaire*. I told her about my difficulties, and, you know the stingy old thing, she said she could not enter into all such details, that everybody had their troubles and difficulties, that I must see what I had to do, that I must make the necessary arrangements. I was very meek and humble, and just as I was leaving the room I looked back at her, gave a start, and said: 'Excuse me, Madame, but being a portrait painter I am greatly interested in remarkable physiognomies. Might I ask Madame if anyone has ever told her how strongly she resembles her Royal Highness the Princess Marie-Amélie de Bourbon?'

"'Her Majesty Queen Amélie,' said the old lady, correcting me. 'Yes,' she continued, beaming all over her face, and smoothing her white corkscrew curls before the glass. 'Yes, it has often been remarked upon.'

"I left her in high good humour, because, you see, being a portrait painter, my opinion seemed to her of considerable importance, and I was allowed all the time I wanted to pay off my arrears. One must know how to tackle people in this world."

In the rue de la Sorbonne, my landlord was a

strange old usurer of the Balzacian type. He used to ask me down to his study, and delighted in telling me of how he had made his way in life. He had started as a small tailor in the Latin Quarter, and had gradually added money-lending to the students to his trade. At this he had made a big fortune. "I own seven houses in Paris to-day," he used to tell me, swelling with importance. He took great pleasure in going to law, and must have spent a large part of his income in this way. He was always engaged in some legal business whenever I saw him, and he used to explain the case to me, and describe the various tricks he was going to play his adversaries. Once when I got into some difficulty he took the management of my affairs into his own hands. I won the day, but found that the old gentleman had been working for himself and that I was rather worse off for his intervention than if I had settled with my adversary on his own terms. His opinion was that the world was made up of fools and sharps (*roublards*), and that it was the bounden duty of the latter to prey on the former. He classified the whole genus of students as fool, himself he considered the type of the *roublard*.

The best Parisian landlord with whom I had dealings was a French nobleman who owned a house in the rue Lafayette. He once intervened on my behalf at personal loss to himself. My neighbour on the fourth floor, who occupied a flat the rent of which was five times as much as mine, owned a horrible parrot, which he used to place outside his kitchen window, just opposite the room in which I used to work. It was a most learned

bird, and could imitate, with marvellous fidelity, the drawing of corks, the ringing of bells, the gurgling of fluids, the mewing of cats, and a hundred other familiar sounds. And these vocal exercises were kept up unceasingly all day long. It was impossible to work, to think. I did not have a moment's peace. Letters to my neighbour remained without response, but my cook was told by the *cordon bleu* over the way that her master advised people who did not like parrots to go where there were no parrots, that he had reason to believe that the parrot was a tropical bird which did not flourish in England, and that perhaps if I returned to England, and in this way rendered France a decided service, I should not be worried by parrots. I hesitated for a long time between making up a tasty *boulette* with minced parsley and shooting it into the parrot's cage across the courtyard by means of a catapult, and writing to our landlord. I thought that the latter course would be useless, because I did not believe that there existed in Paris a single *probloque* who would side with a tenant paying only forty-eight pounds a year against one who paid more than that sum every quarter-day. But in the end I wrote, and to my surprise my landlord took most vigorous steps on my behalf. He signified to my neighbour that the nuisance must be stopped at once ; and as no notice was taken of this summons, he applied to the courts to have the lease cancelled, and promptly gave the parrot's master notice to leave. The apartment remained unlet for fully twelve months after my neighbour had vacated it, so that my landlord's intervention on my behalf cost him over two

hundred pounds. It appeared that, having engaged in literary pursuits himself, he could, as he wrote me, sympathise with me in my trouble. After the nuisance had been stopped by the drastic means I have described, he wrote again and said that he hoped that now that I was assured of peace and quiet, I should produce *des chefs-d'œuvre*. I wish I had been able to do so, if only in homage to him. He was too kind-hearted a man to be a success as a *probloque*, and years later, passing that way, I went in and spoke to the concierge—the same woman who had been there in my time—and she told me that he had been forced to sell the house long ago, and that she was now in the employment of a big manufacturer. "Monsieur de M——," she said, "was much too soft with his lodgers. The new landlord is *un homme serieux* and treats his tenants as they so richly deserve to be treated."

This woman was one of the most superstitious people I have ever met, even in Paris. All her gains in the way of *pourboires, deniers à Dieu* and *étrennes* she spent on the fortune-tellers of the quarter. Apart from this she was always to be seen trying to divine the future by means of cards. It appeared that her daughter had married a very unsatisfactory young man—are the husbands of women's daughters ever very satisfactory?—and her reason for consulting the cards was to find out how soon he would break his neck, or in the alternative be run over by an omnibus.

With regard to concierges, or house-porters, it may be said of them that there is no class more cordially disliked in Paris than these people. It is rather unfair on them, because being in the

service of the landlords they are naturally forced to look after their employers' interests, and this brings them into constant conflict with the tenants. But as a general rule they are not an estimable set of people. Their brief authority is often misused, and while they are abjectly servile towards the rich *rentier* who lives on the first floor, they will rate and bully the poor seamstress or needy author who dwells on the " first floor as you descend from the sky."

On general principles they dislike the tenants, and are at constant war with them. When Chavette brought out a novel entitled " Beloved of his Concierge " (*Aimé de son Concièrge*), the mere name of the book brought it instantaneous success.

For the sake of one's peace of mind it is necessary for the dweller in a Parisian flat to be on good terms with the concierge. That functionary has it in his power to make one's life very unpleasant indeed. He can forget to bring up one's letters in the morning, he can tell people who come to ask for one that one has gone out, and thus spoil an important appointment. He can pretend to be asleep at nights when you ring at the front door, and leave you for a long time cooling your heels in the street, before he pulls the string which draws the bolt and gives you admission. It is even in his power to be more mischievous still. He detains in his hands the character and credit of each one of his tenants. It is to him that the inquiry agent who wishes to know particulars as to your solvability addresses himself ; it is of him that the police seek information concerning you. It fell to my lot once to have to make through the British

Embassy an application to the Ministry of Justice to take up a prosecution in which I was interested. Shortly after the note had been sent from the Embassy to the Ministry a man from the central police office called at my house and put my concierge—she was the superstitious mother-in-law of whom I have spoken—through a prolonged cross-examination about me. What was my income? How many servants did I keep? What kind of provisions did my cook fetch from market? How was my cellar stocked? Did I entertain much? What sort of people came to see me? Did I go out much into society? What houses did I go to? Could she say whether I was ever asked to the Elysée to the President's receptions, or to the houses of any of the Ministers? And so on. She told me all about it when I came home, and I suppose that she had answered the questions favourably to me, because the Ministry did what I had wished it to do. But had I been on bad terms with her she could easily have brought about the opposite result. "What seemed to impress this gentleman most," she informed me, "was when I told him that though neither Monsieur nor his secretary were at home, he could, if he liked, see Monsieur's second secretary. The man gave a whistle. 'Oh!' he said, 'he stands himself a couple of secretaries. Then he must be a big vegetable'" (*anglicé*, a big pot). "'A secretary and an under-secretary! Bigre!'" The "under-secretary," by the way, was a lad who had come over to learn journalism in Paris in my house, and who in return for the experience he gained under me was giving me his occasional services as a

shorthand writer gratuitously. Since those days he has made big strides and is now one of the most important men on an American journal published in Paris. The "secretary," who came to me as shorthand writer at thirty shillings a week, is now foreign correspondent to the largest London daily.

French slang has many contemptuous designations for the concierge—*lourdier*, *cloporte*, *cerbère*, etc. The word which annoys him most, however, is *pipelet*. Call a concierge by that name and you make a mortal enemy of him. The feminine of the word is *pipelette*.

The Parisian concierge is not well paid, and that may be one of the reasons why his temper is soured. In many houses the only wages he receives from the landlord in addition to the stuffy *loge* by the front door, in which he and his family have to live, is from twelve pounds to twenty-four pounds a year. The rest of his income is made up out of the lodgers. When he lets an apartment he is by Paris usage entitled to a small money present, which is called "God's tithe" (*denier à Dieu*), and which rarely exceeds sixteen shillings. On New Year's Day he gets *étrennes* (New Year's Day boxes) from every one of his lodgers, from a couple of louis from the first-floor tenant to a couple of francs from the poor seamstress or author *au sixième*. When wine is brought into the house he is supposed to be entitled to a few bottles as an act of grace. Before the telephone was introduced he was able to make a good addition to his income by carrying notes and running errands. That resource has been greatly diminished of late. He is generally a poor man, and as such is soured. Being rung up at all

hours of the night by tardy lodgers does not tend to improve his temper.

I think the Parisian concierge of whom I have the least pleasant recollection of the many hundreds of his class with whom I had dealings in Paris was the man who kept the *loge* in the house where Major Esterhazy lived during the beginning of the Dreyfus business. This man and his wife pretended to be most sympathetic with the major. They spoke of him as one of the best of men, and on the other hand reviled Captain Dreyfus, his co-religionaries and all his supporters. It impressed me favourably from the first with the major's character to hear how well his concierges spoke of him, because I knew that he was a poor man and so could not have bought their good words. My duty often took me to his house, and every time I went there I had a chat with these people, who seemed most anxious to serve his interests. Well, later on, it appeared that they were entirely in the service and interests of the Dreyfus family, that their friendship for their lodger was a mere sham and had been assumed as a disguise to the system of espionage in which they were engaged. They had kept day by day a diary of all the major's comings and goings, and detailed every visit which was paid to him, with particulars about the people who called on him, and what they had said, how long they had stayed, and so on. My own name figured many times in this diary and was read out at the High Court, but it had been so misspelt and was so mispronounced that nobody can have recognised me under it.

Esterhazy himself seems to have been duped by

them, for he more than once told me that they were good, honest people, who seemed to have a genuine affection for him. When he heard of the truth he simply shrugged his shoulders. The major always took things in a very casual way. I remember once, as I was driving with him down the Avenue de L'Opera, he asked me to stop the cab. "There's a police spy behind us," he said. "He has been following the cab on foot ever since we got into it and he must be dead beat by now. Let's ask him to get up with us. After all, the poor devil is only doing what he has been detailed to do, and there is plenty of room for him in this cab." I made no objections, so the major hailed the man, who, as soon as the cab stopped, had dodged behind a newspaper kiosk, where he was puffing and panting like a grampus. "Come on, my friend," cried Esterhazy. "You'll be run off your legs if you try to follow us on foot. Jump up here."

The detective shook his head. "Thank you all the same, *mon commandant*," he said, "but it wouldn't do. If one of the chiefs saw me riding with you. . . . But if you would be so kind as to change into an omnibus, I could get in behind you and . . . as you say, it is terrible hard work running after a cab like this."

We were close to our destination, so I proposed to the major that we should get out and walk, which would give our "shadow" a chance of following us without fatigue, and that is what we did.

I have often wondered, since taxi-cabs have been introduced into Paris, and the horse fiacre is hardly ever used now, how on earth the poor detectives who are ordered to follow a man can manage to

execute their orders. They are not allowed a penny for expenses ; even if they take an omnibus they are expected to pay the fare out of their very small wages.

I was taking Esterhazy that afternoon to introduce him to the late David Christie Murray. The novelist had been abusing him from what he had read in the papers and I had told him that he ought to know the man before he spoke so badly of him, that whatever Esterhazy might have done he certainly was neither a drunkard nor a debauchee, but a pleasant, highly educated and most interesting man, which were almost the exact words in which Zola had described him to me. I also suggested that he should ask Esterhazy any questions he liked, and if satisfied with his answers should render him justice in the articles he was writing for *The Daily News* on the *grande affaire*. The major had lent himself very readily to this arrangement, and the meeting came off at the Hotel Continental. I did not stay to hear the two men conversing, but I heard that Esterhazy readily answered Murray's searching questions, and that they had parted, apparently on the best of terms. However, when I met Murray that night, all I could get from him about the major was that he, David Christie Murray, did not like his face, did not like his face at all. All I said was that I wondered whether the major liked his face, his, David Christie Murray's face, any better. As far as Esterhazy was concerned the interview was unproductive of good results, for Murray attacked him with renewed and increased bitterness.

Esterhazy was very proud of being a lineal

descendant of the great Attila. He had the Attila motto on his signet ring under the Esterhazy crest: "I am the scourge of God." He was fond of talking of the home of his ancestors, Hungary, and spoke of the Hungarians as the most aristocratic people in Europe. "In my country," he said, "there are whole villages where everybody is a nobleman. I remember once, when riding out in the mountains, coming to a village and wanting to be shaved. In Hungary almost every peasant is a barber in his leisure hours and so I did not anticipate any difficulty. But, would you believe it? before I could get a man to shave me I had to satisfy him that I was of noble descent. 'We are all noble in this village,' they told me, 'and we do not shave common people.' After I had given them my name and shown them my signet ring, they could not do enough to serve me."

The impression I got of Esterhazy was that he was a very clever man, full of resources and of great bravery. One of his principal weaknesses was his mania for writing letters. One night in London I helped him to dodge a French police spy who had been dogging us all over the West End. I took the major down to Charing Cross and got him to get into the train for Dover. The guard, at my request, locked him in. I took leave of him through the window and left him to slip out on the other side. It was immediately telegraphed to Paris that Major Esterhazy had left for France—we had been under observation all the time—and this announcement appeared in all the Parisian papers next morning. In the meanwhile we had met outside at an appointed place and I had taken him to a

quiet hotel off Norfolk Street, where he hired a bedroom for the night. He was only just to sleep there once, but when he came down from inspecting the room, he grumbled, saying: "There is no writing-table up there." I saw nothing more of him after his adventures with Rowland Strong, but I hear that he has settled down very comfortably in England and is quite a patriotic Imperialist. "We *must* have a strong navy, *que diable*," he may be heard to say, speaking about England. "We cannot let the Germans steal a march on us."

One day when I was with Esterhazy in London I had a curious experience of the lady journalist. I had been dining with the major in a restaurant near Charing Cross, when a man came up to our table and said that Mademoiselle So-and-So of the Parisian daily, *La Fronde*, who was in the restaurant, would be much obliged to me if I would go over to her and speak with her. I happened to know the young woman's name, as a writer on the paper in question, which was entirely written and produced by women. I was quite willing to oblige a woman confrère, and so went to her table. The lady journalist said that she had noticed with whom I was dining and would be greatly obliged to me if I would let her interview me. I said that I knew that the *Fronde* was devoted body and soul to the Dreyfus party, and that as Esterhazy had given me his confidence, I was afraid I could not tell her much. She asked me then why I went about with such a man as Esterhazy, and I told her that as I was deputed by my journal to "cover the Dreyfus affair" I found it advisable to keep in close touch with the man who held the keys of the mystery.

She then said that she quite understood that I should not care to give away any of the major's secrets but that all the same she was sure I could give her materials for a very interesting article, that she was very hard up for "copy," and that she felt certain I would oblige a woman if I possibly could do so. She worked on the male instinctive feeling of chivalry so effectively that, having obtained permission from the major—who after a glance at the lady journalist wished me joy of my conquest—I found myself a few minutes later in an attic bedroom in the Charing Cross Hotel with my interviewer and a lady friend of hers. There was only one chair in the place, so I had to sit on the bed, while the lady's friend accommodated herself on the rickety *table de nuit*. I did my best to supply the good woman with interesting matter, and spent the greater part of a precious hour in talking to her. She seemed to be very pleased with what I told her and took voluminous notes. When I left that attic bedroom she thanked me most heartily and said that if all confrères were so obliging, poor girls who had to earn their living in journalism would not have so hard a time. Three days later I saw the article in the *Fronde*, and I do not think I ever read a worse "slating" of myself. I was represented as being in the pay of Esterhazy, as being engaged with him in all kinds of iniquitous schemes; it was hinted that I might indeed be the "fair young man" ("except that *he* can hardly be described as young") who had figured in an early stage of the affair, and the attention of the Paris police was drawn to my person and to my doings. The young lady concluded her

article by saying that she could paint me in a few final words : " He was the friend of the notorious Oscar Wilde."

It did not seem to me cricket, even journalistic cricket. But then do women, when they are forced to struggle for a living, ever play the game ? I have never met any such.

Apropos of chivalry, it has been my experience that nowadays people who have to do with horses are more destitute of that quality than any other class of persons.

It fell to my lot once to play the part of *probloque* myself—that is to say that for some months I was a landlord in France and had a tenant. I had the pleasure of being addressed as *Monsieur le Propriétaire,* and of signing my name with the real landlordly flourish to receipts for rent. The " property " was a cottage down at Auvers-sur-Oise, the home of Daubigny the painter, and my tenant was a man who was manager of a scent factory in the neighbourhood. He walked along swathed in dulcet odours, and if in the open air it was possible to bear his company, indoors he was overpowering in perfume. But he was a pleasant, good-natured man, and he told me many things that I did not know about his industry. He told me, for instance, that musk is the basis of every scent in the market, and he gave me cynical details as to the raw materials from which " new-mown hay," " lilies of the valley," " Parma violets " and other delicious scents are extracted.

He confided to me that his trade was not a pleasant one. " It has all kinds of drawbacks," he told me. " My friends all chaff me. My aroma

spoils my appetite. Fried onions, of which I am very fond, taste like cachous. When I go into a *café* people look askance at me. They seem to think that smelling so strongly of scent I must just have come from some ignoble boudoir. I get so sick myself of my fragrance that I never pass a muck-heap without feeling that I would like to roll in it, just to give my nostrils a rest and a change. I am very fond of dogs, but since I have been at that factory not a dog will stay with me. Cats, on the other hand, which I abhor, welcome me and rub their beastly bodies against my legs. But it is the peasants down at Auvers-sur-Oise who cause me the most misery. They have christened me '*l'homme qui pue*' (the man who stinks), and they chaff and ridicule me whenever I go out. Some will pretend to be disgusted with the aroma which I spread around me, others run up and dab their handkerchiefs against my body and go off in pretended ecstasies at the delicious perfume which that impact has communicated to their *tire-jus* (handkerchiefs). I am rather a quick-tempered man and I am afraid that some of these days I shall get angry. It is rather hard to be constantly laughed at by such brutes as the Seine et Oise peasants. No, it is not a pleasant trade, and if somebody would leave me ten thousand francs a year, who would quit the perfume industry? Why, Papa!" He added that the fact that his wife had left him because "he smelled too good" was not a sufficient set-off, though, no doubt, a pleasant circumstance.

Some weeks after this conversation I was startled by receiving from my tenant a communica-

tion dated from the prison at Pontoise, asking me to come over at once and see him. I rather liked the man, and went immediately. Already in the long corridor on to which his cell opened I could detect his presence. It smelled like a hayfield under a summer sun, and the chief warder said to me: "The prison used to smell mouldy, but since X—— has been our guest, *cela embaume*" (it smells very sweet). "He is a real bouquet, and I hope they keep him on remand as long as possible. It is like the spring, and seems to have raised the spirits and the moral tone of all the other prisoners."

I learned from my friend that he had got himself into serious trouble. A few nights previously as he was coming from Méry station some of his Auvers-sur-Oise persecutors had followed him on the road, shouting out after him: "*L'homme qui pue! L'homme qui pue! Conspue!*" and so on. He seems to have lost his temper and to have ordered them to stop following him. They continued and redoubled their chaff. Then he flew into a violent passion, pulled out his revolver and fired three shots at them. Fortunately, nobody was hit, but none the less a grave offence had been committed. In France it is as serious a crime to attempt to kill as it is to kill, and I have seen men sentenced to death for firing at people without wounding them. Prado, for instance, was sentenced to death on one account of attempted murder. The French law states that an attempt where there has been "a beginning of execution" but which has failed for reasons independent of the accused man's will is as culpable as if the attempt had succeeded, and is punishable with equal severity.

I understood from the chief warder that the examining magistrate seemed inclined to charge the man with attempted murder, and knowing the terrible severity of the juries who sit at the Versailles Assizes, I felt very concerned indeed for my friend. He himself told me that he thought he had got himself "into a bad set of sheets" and the reason why he had sent for me was to ask me to go and shut up his house and do various other little services for him in the village.

Before going to Auvers-sur-Oise I asked for an audience with the examining magistrate, with whom I was acquainted, and I told him all the good I knew about my tenant, how he paid his rent regularly, how he was a "serious" business man, industrious, orderly, and so forth, and I also related how ever since he had come to live at Auvers he had been persecuted by the peasants. I will not flatter myself that my words had any great influence with the pompous and austere *juge d'instruction*, but anyhow a day or two later I heard with much pleasure that the charge of attempted murder had been withdrawn, that the man was not to be sent to the Assizes, but was simply to be prosecuted for "carrying prohibited arms." He was shortly afterwards brought before the Court of Correctional Police at Pontoise and fined rather heavily, so heavily that he thought it necessary to ask me to let him off that quarter's rent.

He returned to Auvers, but I never heard of his being insulted again. In fact the peasants gave him a wide berth. "We can always tell when he is coming," said one of them to me, "by the increasing suavity of the air as he draws closer. So

then we run away, because he is a bad-tempered man and distributes little pills which don't smell good, don't smell good at all."

Besides being a landlord at Auvers, I was also a tenant there. My landlord was a drunken young fellow, a kind of rustic scapegrace, who spent all his money in orgies in town. During my tenancy of his cottage he was serving in the army in Paris, and one night, passing up a street off the place de la République, I saw him in a low wineshop. He was obviously very drunk, and was surrounded by a number of roughs of the quarter. As he was in uniform, and as I knew that he ought to be back in barracks at that hour, I determined to rescue him, and so hailed a cab, rushed into the shop, and dragged him out before anybody could interfere. Then I told the cabman to drive to the barracks on the place de la République. By the time we got there my landlord was senseless. It was impossible to arouse him, and in the end the cabman and I were obliged to carry him like a corpse up to the barracks door. Here I rang, a sergeant opened, and seeing our burden asked us to carry it in and lay it down in the courtyard. "I'll send for the guard," said the sergeant, "and send him to the cells. And to-morrow," he added, chuckling, "your friend will see what he will get for his cold."

This wretched young man, after he returned to Auvers, got into terrible difficulties. He was arrested for the murder of an old miser who lived in that village, and the circumstantial evidence was very strong indeed against him. He had been seen with the murdered man very shortly before the crime, he had been heard to ask him for the

loan of money, and he was totally unable to give any account of what he had been doing or of where he had been on the night of the crime. Furthermore, the clothes he had been wearing when he was seen at the victim's house were found to be stained with blood, and bore traces of having been recently washed.

Everybody thought that he was guilty, and indeed the case was so black against him that after he had lain several months in Versailles gaol he was about to be sent to the Assizes on the capital charge, when the real murderer, a tramp, confessed his guilt. My landlord had simply been hopelessly drunk on the night of the crime, and had really been unable to give any account of himself. I visited him once or twice at Versailles gaol, and from his bearing—as well as on general principles—believed him guilty.

Auvers-sur-Oise in those days used to be a very pretty place. There were many thatched cottages dotted about the plain, to the delight of the artists. But there was a poor woman there whom the sight of a thatched roof must always have filled with feelings of regret and dismay. She was a washerwoman, and she was ostracised by everybody in the place. She lived all alone and nobody ever spoke to her. The children used to shout out rude things after her as she slouched along the roads carrying her dripping bundles from the river. It appeared that several years ago she had fallen madly in love with a fire-insurance agent in Pontoise, and it was generally reported that it was her lover who had prompted her to do what she did. Shortly after she had made his acquaintance a number of

fires broke out in Auvers, and several houses were burned to the ground. In every case the thatch had first been set alight, and from the outset incendiarism had been suspected. One night the girl was taken red-handed setting fire to the thatched roof of another cottage. She escaped lynching by a miracle, and was taken to Versailles on the charge of arson, which in France is a capital offence. I remember that a man was sentenced to death and duly executed for arson at the Benedictine Monastery at Fécamp. The examining magistrate endeavoured to persuade her to implicate her lover, but she steadfastly refused to do so. However, it was so obvious that the poor creature had committed her crimes so as to send the peasants of Auvers flocking to the insurance office to protect their houses against the risk of being burned, that the jury granted her extenuating circumstances, with the result that instead of being sentenced to death she got off with several years' imprisonment. After her release, the insurance agent, who had married in the meanwhile, and had a family, refused to have anything to do with her. She returned to Auvers. But the peasants never forgave her, and her only means of earning a living was by washing for the artists and Parisians who came to spend the summer there. We all sympathised with her and gave her our custom, a thing which only embittered the natives more against those "*sacrés Parisiens.*" The peasant in the environs of Paris hates nothing on God's earth worse than a Parisian, although it is by sending his produce to the Paris markets that he earns so excellent a living.

CHAPTER XI

"*Un Tendre*"—François Coppée and Maxime Pailleron—"The Parisian in the Red Shirt"—Coppée and Maeterlinck—Afield and Afloat with a Poet—English and French Authors—The Black Cardinals—Henri Murger—Murger and Edmond About—Murger and the Banknotes—The *Plat du Jour*—De Goncourt's Unhappiness—Madame Judith Gautier—The First Woman Academician—Baudelaire's Last Days—One Lucid Moment—The Death of Jean Moréas—His Last Words—A Poet's Obsequies—Article 340—Tardy Justice to Women—Under the Cypress-tree

MANY people, amongst the artists and visitors to Auvers, were kind to the poor *incendiaire*, whom the peasants so hated, but kindest of all was the poet, Monsieur François Coppée, of the French Academy. Coppée, who spent several summers in that Oise-side village, was what the French describe as *un tendre*, a sentimentalist. In certain mouths the expression *un tendre* implies contempt and ridicule, and I shall never forget the tone in which Maxime Pailleron hissed it out, when, speaking of Coppée, I had told Pailleron that he had declared to me that his one hope was that his companion should close his eyes when he died. "Ah," said the Academician, "that is Coppée all over. Close his eyes in death! Yes, and *en attendant*——"

Nobody, however, who knew Coppée could fail to like and respect him. He was really a kind-hearted man. Success had not spoiled him, and even after he became an Academician he did not desert the Latin Quarter, nor turn his back on his Bohemian friends. Strange were often the callers

at the rue Oudinot. Coppée used to be looked upon as the last resource of the impecunious, and I never heard that any needy man of letters who applied to him was sent empty away. But as everybody knew that he was not at all a rich man, even the selfish Bohemians approached him only when every other source had failed.

It was hearing from the poor girl how kind "the Parisian in the red shirt" had been to her that made me wish to make Coppée's acquaintance. We were neighbours at Auvers, but I had always entertained a kind of prejudice against him. For one thing I thought him a *poseur*, and, indeed, with his slouch hat, Garibaldian shirt and top-boots he presented, as he walked about the lanes of our country retreat, a rather curious spectacle. He looked like some "bum" artist of the Latin Quarter, or of Montmartre. And then, at that time, one never could go to any evening party in Paris without being bored with his "Grève des Forgerons" ("The Blacksmiths' Strike"), which was as popular with the amateur drawing-room reciter as, in England, "The Charge of the Light Brigade." One felt, very unjustly, no doubt, a real grievance against its author.

After I had made his acquaintance I realised how much I had missed by keeping aloof from him for so long. He was a delightful companion. The man I had imagined to be a *poseur* proved himself simple, unaffected and artless. He was so kind and tolerant that it did one good to come to him from the cynicism and bitterness of literary Paris. I never heard him say a bad thing about anybody. He never decried a brother-author. "We belong

to different schools" was what he once remarked in my presence, when a journalist, knowing with what horror "La Terre" must have filled him, asked him what was his opinion on Emile Zola after that book. And that was the severest thing I ever heard him say.

It was during the very first walk we took together that he spoke to me with great enthusiasm about a young Belgian poet who had sent him a volume of poems, which he described as "marvels." He recited verses from this book and drew my attention to their beauty. The poet was Maurice Maeterlinck, then totally unknown, and the volume was "Serres Chaudes," his first book of poems. Coppée seemed particularly struck with a passage where the poet typified sadness in the look of the eyes of a peasant at the window of a factory, a peasant who had left the country to come and work in the town, and longed for the open fields and the green trees and the august silence of the plains.

As with all Frenchmen, Coppée was at first rather reserved with his new English friend. The French seem long ago to have given up trying to understand us English, who look at things from so different a point of view from theirs. This is especially the case with French men of letters when they are brought into contact with English writers. They don't understand our aims, they dislike our prejudices, and they can't understand our methods. When I told Coppée that when books were commissioned in England the number of words of which it was to consist was always stipulated, he actually said : "*Quelle horreur !*" and added that such a stipulation would prevent

him from doing anything worth reading. "And if I could do it," he added, "I know that there would always be one additional word thrown in, gratis, for nothing, *pro Deo*, which would describe my feelings."

For the rest, Coppée's writings more closely resembled in moral tone that of the best English writers than any Frenchman's work of which I know. He had an abhorrence for what is unclean, and his books can essentially be read *par les jeunes filles*. Daudet also claimed never wilfully to have written anything objectionable, yet by the irony of things he ranks, on account of his novel, "Sapho," both in England and America, as a pornographical writer.

After we had known each other some time and had taken many walks together along the banks of the Oise, or excursions on the river in my punt, Coppée became much more friendly and communicative, and one day told me that my long stay in France seemed to have Parisianised me, that I did not seem like an Englishman at all. I cannot say that I took this as a compliment, but I know that a Frenchman thinks he can pay you no greater one than to tell you you appear almost French to him.

I think I had impressed him that day by a remark I made at lunch at a restaurant at Lisle-Adam. A lobster had been served, a *homard rémoulade*, and, pointing to it, I had said: "Here, Coppée, is the cardinal of the sea." This was a remark made by some writer, who got very much laughed at for it as he had overlooked the fact that a lobster does not wear a scarlet coat until after it has been boiled,

and that while in the sea it is black. I saw that Coppée was going to pull me up and tell me that that blunder had been made before, when without giving him time to speak, I went on. "Of course I am referring to the black cardinals." "The black cardinals?" cried Coppée, "I have never heard of them." "Oh yes, you have," I retorted, "only you have forgotten. Don't you remember how Napoleon, to punish certain cardinals for refusing to obey some order he had given them, issued an order forbidding them to wear their scarlet vestments. They might wear black only, and were known as *les cardinaux noirs*. It was no doubt of them that the man who first described the lobster as the cardinal of the sea was thinking."

François Coppée, when he was quite a young man, had known Murger as a noted figure in the Latin Quarter and had an extraordinary admiration for that unhappy author, who, if ever there were such people, was one of those "wilful missings" of whom Kipling writes. He spoke of him with great enthusiasm, although at the time that he made Murger's acquaintance the author of "La Vie de Bohème" had quite reached the end of his tether. Murger died at the age of thirty-nine, but long before that early age absinthe and irregular modes of life had killed his genius and his power of work. It is related that one evening he overtook Edmond About on the boulevards and told him that he had received a commission for a novel from a publisher, but that he could not find a single idea for a book. Would About help a very poor brother author by giving him some suggestion, a sketch of a plot? About, who had a most fertile

brain, took Murger's arm, and as they walked along together told him a long story of his invention, which he said could be admirably worked up into a novel. Murger was delighted with it, and left About saying that he had saved his life.

"You have simply been wasting your time," said the man with whom About had been walking. "Murger will never write a line of that book. It is a physical impossibility for him to do so. *C'est un homme fini.*"

"And," said About to me, once speaking of this incident, "he was right. Murger never wrote the book. But my time had not been wasted, for I wrote it myself, and it was one of my most popular works. I only hit on the idea after Murger had accosted me, so if he had never come up that story might never have existed."

Coppée told me, as a pathetic instance of Murger's poverty, how one day he had heard him say: "There has been an issue of new banknotes. And people tell me that they are blue in colour."

I said that I did not see any pathos in that, that a writer who had had such a reputation as Murger won with his "Vie de Bohème" might have had as many banknotes of his own as he liked.

Murger was the foolish kind of Bohemian, who loved squalor and disorder. Daudet used to speak most bitterly about that type of man, but then Daudet was not *un tendre*.

Murger was once in a restaurant, and as a waiter passed him, carrying on a tray the change for a thousand-franc note for some rich customer who had just paid his bill, he cried out: "I say, *garçon*, if that is the dish of the day" (*plat du jour*)

"I'll take some, please.'" Nobody is more keen after money than your Bohemian who professes to despise it.

This trait could be recognised in Edmond de Goncourt also. Towards the end of his life his want of financial success plagued him incessantly. He had all the glory that any man could desire. He was acknowledged all over the world as a master in literature, yet he was always dissatisfied. I was at the banquet given him at the Grand Hotel by his admirers, in what connection I do not now remember, and heard the eulogies poured out upon him by all the speakers. At the close, the Minister of the Interior pinned the cross of officer of the Legion of Honour to his coat, and for once in his life the old gentleman seemed happy and contented. But a day or two afterwards Daudet told me: "He is fretting again. Nothing will ever please him." It was simply that he could not stomach the fact that both Daudet and Zola, especially Zola, were drawing huge incomes from their books, while his royalties amounted to only a moderate sum. This constant preoccupation betrayed itself in his conversation and can be read between the lines in many passages of his diary. He was permanently morbid-minded. On the 1st of January 1881, when he had still fifteen years to live and was as sturdy a man of fifty-nine as one could wish to see, he entered on the pages of his journal: "At my age, to wake up to a new year must be a cause of anxiety. A man asks himself, 'Shall I live to the end of the year?'" He made most of his own unhappiness. He kept pulling up hurdles to jump over. Whilst he was beautifying his house at

Auteuil he kept saying that he felt that everything that he was doing in that direction was for the ultimate benefit of *un bourgeois quelconque* (some sort of a business man). I could not help recalling this remark of his one day last year when I was visiting the beautiful house which Mortimer Menpes built and adorned, and which was then in the market. Menpes was reported to have spent over thirty thousand pounds on it and the agents were asking only nine thousand five hundred pounds as its price.

Goncourt's exact words about his house were as follows: "Fits of melancholy come upon me when I reflect that all that I am doing to make of this house at Auteuil, the home of a poet and a painter, that all that is being done for a *bourgeois quelconque* at no distant date." That was eighteen years before he died.

Yet though he was always unhappy about his money affairs he left a large fortune, thanks to which he was able to endow that famous Goncourt Academy which gives such valiant support to many writers.

One was glad to hear, by the way, of the election of a woman to this Goncourt Academy, "the Academy of Ten," as it is also called in Paris. In October of last year, a vacancy having been created in the ranks of the Goncourt Academicians by the death of Jules Renard, Madame Judith Gautier, the daughter of Théophile Gautier, whom Baudelaire addressed as "the perfect magician in letters," was elected, the first woman who has enjoyed the proud title of "*academicienne.*" One feels that de Goncourt would have greatly ap-

proved of this election, for Judith Gautier's books, "The Book of Jade," "The Daughter of the Sun," "The Imperial Dragon," "Living Flowers of Yosi-Wara" and other works about the gorgeous East show her interest in what so absorbingly interested the founder of the Academy.

Madame Gautier, who at one time was the wife of the late Catulle Mendés, lives in a small apartment in the rue Washington. She bears a striking resemblance to her father, the immortal author of "Emaux et Camées." The income which is attached to the place of Goncourt Academician (four hundred pounds a year) will relieve her of the necessity of writing things which do not interest her. She has now, thanks to the ardour with which Lucien Descaves argued her claim to become a member of the Academy, emerged from Grub Street.

I saw her shortly after her election, and it was pleasant to see how delighted she was with the honour done to a woman writer. She took her election less as a tribute to herself and her years of arduous labour than as a recognition of the equal rights of women to the rewards and honours of artistic merit.

Woman-like, she was already discussing the dress she would wear at the meetings of the Academy. Unlike the French Academy, the Academy founded by de Goncourt prescribes no costume, nor has it any habitation. The Ten meet at different restaurants, where they dine together and discuss literature. Madame Judith Gautier had designed for her toilette for these dinners a green dress embroidered with flowers, and to show her predilection

for things Oriental, she proposed to wear, hanging from her belt, a small Chinese sword. She declared that she intended to play her part as Academician very seriously, and anticipated much work. There would be many books to read, so that she could vote at the meetings when the different prizes for literary excellence, which the bounty of Monsieur de Goncourt instituted, were allotted.

Madame Gautier is most interesting to listen to when she speaks of Baudelaire. Her father was the poor poet's greatest friend and was with him to the last. It is related that once when he went to visit him towards the end, and was looking through the drawer in which Baudelaire kept his manuscripts, to see if he could find anything that could be offered to a publisher or editor, he saw his friend watching him, with the tears streaming down his face. Baudelaire was stricken with paralysis and it was thought that his brain had quite gone. But the sight of his friend looking at his cherished writings, poems and essays, over which he had spent so many laborious hours, cheered with hopes and ambitions, now never to be realised, seemed to have awakened memory and consciousness in the poet's mind, and the utter wretchedness of his position had been forced upon his understanding. For the rest, this lucid interval was of the briefest, and before Gautier left the room Baudelaire had relapsed again into idiocy and sat huddled there in his *fauteuil*, repeating over and over again the horrid word in which he summed up his opinion on the lives of men. It appears that the Greek poet, Moréas, who was also stricken with paralysis before he died, did also, during his last days, say nothing

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH,

(Mr. Sherard's great-grandfather.)

but one horrid word. Only once did he make a lucid pronouncement, and they were his last words. "Life and Death," he said, "are ordures. They do not matter. Poetry is the only thing that counts in this world."

Moréas (his real name was Papadiamantopoulos, and he was the son of the distinguished Greek admiral of that name) was a very old friend of mine. He was a plucky little man, and I have seen him fencing in a sword-duel for over an hour, wounding his adversary badly at the finish. But what one admired most about him was the self-sacrifice with which he devoted his life to his art, the art of poetry. In this respect he resembled Wordsworth, who gave up everything to live and work as a poet. Moréas lived a most modest life. His lodgings were usually of the humblest description, and, as he had much pride in his composition, he rarely let anyone know his address. The only time during more than twenty years' friendship that I ever saw him at home was on the occasion of the duel to which I refer above, when, as his second, I had to fetch him on the morning of the combat. He was then residing in a flat in the rue Lépic. The flat consisted of several rooms, but there was not a scrap of furniture in any one of them, except in his bedroom, where he had a small iron bedstead, with its attributes, a deal table and a chair. Moréas despised the superfluities of life. For the rest, he rarely spent any time indoors. His mode of life was to go to a *café* in the evenings, there to meet brother poets. He would remain discoursing on art and letters until closing time—that is to say, till about two P.M. Then he would sally forth into the

streets of Paris and walk about all night composing his verses. In the early morning he would return to his remote dwelling-place, sup and go to bed, sleeping through the whole of the day. Yet there was nothing of the Bohemian either in his appearance or his manners. He was always smartly dressed, and looked and spoke like a gentleman. And he was a very good " pal." He received great recognition towards the end of his career, was promoted to be officer of the Legion of Honour, and had the satisfaction of seeing his volumes of poems widely bought and read. But just as he was beginning to enjoy the success for which he had worked so hard and so long, Nature revenged herself for his irregular ways of life. He was stricken with paralysis, and after lingering miserably for several months, died surrounded by brother poets. Maurice Barrés was there, and Raymond de Tailhéde and others, and it was to them that he spoke the last words which I have quoted above.

I was down at Cannes when I first heard of his illness, and I wrote him an affectionate letter and sent him some violets. But he was too ill to answer my letter, though he sent me words of thanks through one of his friends.

I thought that flowers would please the poet, and I got the violets at the little booth which stands near the Hotel Gallia. I remember the occasion, because I heard the woman say a curious thing while we were chatting together. There was a little boy in the shop and I asked her if he was her son. She said, no. He was the only child of a poor woman who lived near. I said that the woman

must be pleased to have only one child, if her circumstances were so bad. "Oh," said the florist, "she has eight daughters, but he is the only *enfant* (child)." "So that she has nine children?" I said. "No," she said. "He is the only child." It was like the "We are Seven" riddle, and I did not care to pursue the conversation. I afterwards learned that in that part of France the people speak of boys only as children (*enfants*), girls not counting. This is the invariable rule with the Moors and Arabs. A Moorish or Arab woman who has not borne a son is always described as childless. No doubt down on the Riviera folk learned this from the Moors, under whose domination they lived for many centuries.

I reached Paris on the day on which poor Moréas died and, of course, I went to his funeral. I was horrified to notice, as I walked up to the villa where he lay, that a cinematograph operator was taking pictures of the funeral guests. Everybody of literary consequence was there, and those who did not rightly come under that heading assumed more importance than the others. It was a curious *mélange* of Academicians and Bohemians, actors and artists. But the procession was a very long one. Moréas was honoured in his death by the number of those who attended his obsequies. There walked behind his coffin, however, some extraordinary types. There were men there in opera-hats and velvet jackets. One man was wearing a straw hat and had carpet slippers on his feet. Another walked along reading a copy of his morning's paper and never raised his eyes from the printed pages. Hard by me were two poets

angrily discussing the merits of the deceased as a *littérateur*. Just behind me walked two briefless barristers, whom I had never seen at the Law Courts, but on the other hand had frequently noticed sitting outside some *café* of the Boulevard St Michel. They were arguing all the way to the cemetery, and though at first I felt indignant at their disrespect for the dead, I could not in the end but feel interested in their conversation.

One of them kept repeating : " Article 340 of the Civil Code is done for. It has lived its day. It will disappear for ever from the statute-book. And not too soon either. It was the disgrace of France."

The other as often replied : " The Senate has not yet decided. It is too early to say that Article 340 is done for. For myself, I don't believe it will be interfered with, and I must say I hope it will not. Look what a vast field for blackmailing enterprise its abolition would open out."

The clause in the Civil Code about which these two indecorous lawyers were arguing, Article 340, is the famous law, said to have been dictated to his legislators by Napoleon himself : *La recherche de la paternité est interdite* (Inquiry into the paternity of an illegitimate child is forbidden). This clause has for more than a century been the great grievance of Frenchwomen. It has been the direct cause of innumerable acts of violence. Abandoned women have revenged themselves on their seducers with pistols, knives and vitriol, because the law gave them no redress, no claim on the fathers of their children. And the crying injustice of the law was so fully recognised both by

judges and juries that women indicted for crimes of this nature, so provoked, almost invariably have been acquitted. The brutal severity of the code towards women has for a century inspired some of the greatest writers. In depicting the miseries endured by Fantine for the sake of Cosette, Victor Hugo was girding against Article 340. And how many writers since? But it was only towards the close of last year that the French Chambers agreed to repeal this wicked law. The conscience of men has been awakened, and at last sacrifice has been made of their selfish safeguard. In November of last year the Senate decreed the abolition of this law, the Chamber of Deputies ratified the Senate's vote, and at last man will have in France also to face the full responsibility of his acts. Till now a woman had absolutely no claim on the father of her child. She could neither demand maintenance nor had she any remedy for breach of promise. Her only weapon was violence, shielded as she was by public opinion. So impossible was the position of the single woman with a child that infanticide was little punished, if at all, in France. How largely this iniquitous Article 340 contributed to the steady diminution of the population of France it would be difficult to say, but it cannot be denied that it put a direct premium on child-murder.

A new law is to take the place of Article 340, which in its essential parts will closely resemble our own English Bastardy Acts. The Senate fully discussed the possibilities of blackmail, and safeguards were then and there discussed. The consideration that the abolition of the law would en-

courage women in immorality was dismissed without much argument. One of the speakers declared that the only condition on which he would vote against the maintenance of the law would be an assurance that paternity should not be attributed to any man except on irrefutable proofs and absolute presumptions. But this had all along been stipulated for by the proposer of the amendment. Paris took the news that the Senate had passed the resolution with its usual cynical good-humour. It was pointed out that it was unfortunate that the reform had been initiated in the Senate, because the old gentlemen who compose the Upper Chamber may have been guided largely by the thought that none of them were ever likely to be troubled in the matter, and that people might say that it was rather hard that because they were virtuous there should be no more cakes and ale.

But there can be no doubt that the Senate has done honour to itself by its vote of 11th November, which date marks an enormous step forward in the emancipation and protection of the Frenchwoman.

It was a long, a very long walk from the house where Moréas died, to the cemetery, but so varied were the conversations around me, to which one could not help but listen, that the time passed quickly enough. Certainly it was rather painful to hear everybody in that funeral procession so entirely taken up with his own affairs. The dead was altogether forgotten. And it seemed unusual to me, because, as a rule, the French are most respectful in the ordering of these processions.

For instance, the distressing sight of a hearse being driven along at a sharp trot, with the coffin jolting, which is familiar in England, would arouse great indignation in France.

I suppose that more than three-fourths of the people who followed my friend on that day had only come to show themselves with the hope of seeing their names figuring in the newspaper reports. Egomania was indeed the keynote of their conversation. One man who was walking near me informed his neighbours that he was the Brillat-Savarin of the twentieth century. "*C'est moi qui . . . C'est moi qui . . .*" I recognised him as a Bohemian who "did" the gastronomical column for one of the big Parisian weeklies, and who wrote rather cleverly on cooking, a talent which I admired all the more because I knew that he was so poor that he rarely could afford anything better than a shilling ordinary in one of those *prix-fixe* restaurants of which it is said in Paris that a constant patronage of them is slow but certain suicide.

We took more than an hour and a half to arrive at Père-Lachaise, and then a good half-hour more to reach, through the winding avenues of that city of the dead, the crematorium where the remains of Moréas were to be burned to ashes. Opposite the furnace had been erected a kind of pulpit, from which during the process of cremation speeches were to be made in eulogy of the deceased. When I saw this pulpit I turned and went away. These French funeral orations are dreadful to listen to. Each orator tries to model himself on Bossuet. The peroration in every case calls on

those who have survived to return to the city and work. But my principal objection has ever been that while eulogising the deceased—and here we have Bossuet again—the speaker seeks to draw attention to himself, to his own cleverness.

I preferred to emerge from this atmosphere of egomania, and under a cypress-tree in a secluded spot of the city of the dead to think of my friend as I had known him in the imperial days of our youth, radiant, vital, eloquent. And then I thought of his last words, and I think that before I left the cemetery I had come to agree with what he said—namely, that life and death are nothing, that it is poetry—or, in other words, creation—which alone counts.

CHAPTER XII

Working "*à l'œil*"—Victor Hugo and the Interviewer—Journalism in France—The Mid-Glamorganshire Election—Brillat-Savarin—And the Americans—Towns and Townsmen in France—How to be treated—Camomile Tea and Absinthe—A Hint to Sir Henry Irving—*The Lyons Mail* and the Courier's Descendant—"C. A. P.'s" *Nous*—Public Indifference to Lesurques's Guilt or Innocence—The Inn he Kept—Lesurques and Dubosc—The Honesty of the Republic—Cobbler Marquises—Terms of Distinction—"Mister" Brown—Christening in France—"L. Felicie"

As I was leaving Père-Lachaise that afternoon, I happened upon Reginald Turner, a novelist for whom many of us have a great admiration, and who is of Londoners one of the men who best know Paris. We drove off together in a taxi, and philosophised on the deaths of poets and their lives, and I fancied that we both rather mournfully agreed that perhaps poor Moréas was to be envied more than pitied, seeing that he was out of all the turmoil and disappointment of the life literary. Turner told me that he had not been able to enter the crematorium, and I told him that I might have got in, but had avoided the oratory. At the same time I confessed that it would have amused me—from a cynical point of view—to have watched the faces of many of the Bohemian idlers present when the inevitable appeal should have been made by one or other of the speakers, that we should go home and back to work. Most of the people I had in mind have a great dislike for work in any

shape or form. These are students of the eleventh or twelfth year, who exist miserably on small monthly allowances made them by their families. Their objection to work is as great as that of a man I once overheard in a London street, saying: "Work? Hang the work, I say. I have done no blooming work for the last seven years and yet I have had as good a Saturday night every week as any other man."

Turner and I drove to some place on the boulevards, and it was just before we reached our goal that my attention was taken off his conversation—he was telling me some very interesting things about a new book he was writing—by my noticing one of my former acquaintances at the hotel in the rue Broca in the exercise of his thieving speciality. This was a particularly mean kind of robbery, and was regarded as such even by the man's companions in crime. His "lay" consisted in relieving kindly-disposed strangers of their scarf-pins and other jewellery, while, at his request, they were searching his eye for the something that had been blown into it, which was causing him, according to his story, "such great sufferings." The good Samaritan's hands and attention being thus occupied in his charitable mission, the sneak-thief had ample opportunity to steal scarf-pin and jewellery. This man used to joke about his speciality, saying that he was the only "industrial" in Paris who worked "*à l'œil.*" To work "*à l'œil*" means in French slang to work for nothing, or on credit, the expression being derived from the vernacular of the wineshops, where if a man has no money he winks at the landlord, who, if so inclined, lets him

have what he wants "on the wink" or on the nod. In the mouth of the sneak-thief, working "*à l'œil*" meant literally that he worked with his eye, as he did.

I had been interested in the fellow because it was reported of him that years previously he had been a journalist, and indeed had gained some reputation in his profession. It was alleged of him that it was he who interviewed Victor Hugo one day when the poet was engaged with the exiled Don Pedro, ex-Emperor of Brazil. The occasion was often referred to amongst interviewers as demonstrating the fact that the great men of this world fully appreciate the advantages of newspaper publicity. The story was that the poet and the Emperor were in the midst of an animated discussion, about nothing in particular, when the card of the reporter of an insignificant paper was brought in to the master of the house, that Victor Hugo made his excuses to his imperial guest and went out and allowed himself to be extensively interviewed. On his return to Don Pedro he explained the reason of his absence, and the Emperor agreed with him that nowadays the Press is a power with which even the greatest must count. Whether the reporter on this occasion was the fellow who afterwards developed into the sneak-thief of the rue Broca, though possible, was, I always thought, extremely improbable. There was no proof of the statement beyond the man's word, which was utterly worthless, of course. He used to quote in this connection the saying that in France "journalism leads to everything, provided one gets out of it in time."

Apropos of journalism in France, the ignorance about and indifference towards foreign affairs, which characterises even the leading French journalists, have always been to me a matter of amusement, and to some extent of admiration. One cannot but admire that feeling of theirs that nothing which is not French is of any importance to their readers. It was on this principle that Villemessant ran his eminently successful paper, *Le Figaro*. The average Frenchman assumes towards the rest of the universe the attitude of the *civis Romanus*. Any foreign occurrence will be considered by him as happening "on the other side of our frontiers" and consequently of little or no importance.

Here is a cutting from the most important political paper in Paris, *Le Temps*, appropriately dated April 1st, giving the news of the result of the Mid-Glamorganshire by-election :

"LONDON, *April 1st.*

"M. Gibbins, Liberal, has been elected by 8920 votes against 270 given to M. Kartahorn, Labour candidate."

Apart from the fact that the Labour candidate's name was not Kartahorn, nor anything of the sort, and that he polled not 270 but 6210 votes, the telegram was fairly accurate, sufficiently accurate at anyrate to satisfy the readers of *Le Temps*, as would also be the case with the announcement made in the equally important political journal, *Le Journal des Débats*, after Mr Horatio Bottomley's

re-election for South Hackney, which ran as follows :—

" Monsieur Bottomby est ré-élu à Hackeren Sud."

A huge wall of indifference to what is not of France, French, surrounds the territory of the Republic. I have met middle-class people in France who were as absolutely ignorant of geography, outside their country, as the wildest savage in the Australian bush. I remember a grocer's wife in the town of St Malo who literally did not know whether England lay south, or east, or west of Brittany, and cared less. " All this is outside our frontiers " is the remark that one hears on such occasions.

This reference to the phrase with which the French excuse, or rather explain, their ignorance of foreign affairs, reminds me of the journalist whom I overheard at Moréas's funeral describing himself as the " Brillat-Savarin " of the twentieth century, because the saddest moment in the life of the author of " La Physiologie du Goût " was when he found it advisable to cross the frontiers of his beloved France, and for a period, at least, to turn his back on his native land.

Brillat-Savarin, by the way, is just now being talked about in France, because his fellow-citizens, the Belleysans, have decided to erect a statue to his memory. It has thus been recalled to the public memory that the author of one of the most delightful books on refined gastronomy was also an excellent citizen and a spirited public man. Brillat-Savarin, during the height of the French

Revolution, was mayor of the town of Belley, in which capacity he distinguished himself by his extreme humanity. He was no fit agent for the principles of the Terror, and it was as a "suspect" that he decided to emigrate. It will be readily understood that his political complexion should have been misunderstood by the hyenas of Paris when one recalls that he was the author of certain resolutions which he put to the vote before the Assembly of his province, and which through his influence were duly carried, resolutions of which the following is a specimen :—"The true glory of the citizen is to prevent the effusion of blood and civil war." That was not the kind of resolution which could commend itself to Robespierre and his colleagues, and in 1794 the mayor-gourmet thought it advisable to cross the frontier into Switzerland. From Switzerland he journeyed to America, and it is related of him that there two Americans, who had invited him to dinner, tried to drink him under the table. Brillat-Savarin, however, while appearing to keep pace with them, disposed of his wine by secretly emptying his glass behind his chair, and so succeeded in leaving his two hosts speechless on the floor, while he himself was perfectly sober. "We had to have them carried home in a pitiful condition," he records, and adds that two days later one of them came and complimented him on his drinking prowess. "You are much too heavy a drinker for us," said the American. "It is impossible to drink against you."

I refer above to the citizens of Belley as "*Belleysans*." This is how they are styled in France. One may know French very well indeed

and yet be ignorant of the proper way in which to designate the people of the different French towns. Thus an inhabitant of Pont-à-Mousson is a "*Mussipontain*," a citizen of Blois is a "*Blaisois*," a Chartres man is a "*Chartrain*." The population of St Malo is composed of "*Malouins*," of Saint-Omer, of "*Audomarois*," of Pau, of "*Palois*," of Montélimar, of "*Montiliens*," of Bourg, of "*Bourcais*." From these few specimens it will be seen that it is necessary to know and impossible to guess how a citizen of any French town must be described, and my experience is that very few foreigners and not all French people possess this knowledge. There is no rule to guide one in the formation of these designations. One has simply got to learn them, like many other things in this life.

The trick by which the great Belleysan, Brillat-Savarin, was able to keep pace with the Americans who wished to intoxicate him resembles one that is very currently practised by people in Paris who by trade or circumstance are obliged to accept offers of refreshment. The wine-dealer or *café* proprietor is constantly being asked to drink by alcoholic customers, and so too is the unfortunate female *habituée* of the night-*cafés*. Now neither wine-dealer nor night-butterfly cares to absorb unlimited alcohol, but at the same time the landlord does not care to refuse money, while the female *habituée* cannot afford to turn trade away from the house which is the field of her miserable operations. It is therefore a beneficent ordination of nature that there are two popular liquors sold in the French *cafés* which have exactly the colour of pure water. These are *kirsch* and *eau de vie de*

marc. So if a drink is forced upon either of the traders referred to it is usual for him or her to ask to be served with a little glass of either *kirsch* or *marc*. Water is served, the drinking of it entails no evil consequences, the alcoholic Amphitryon has the satisfaction of standing treat, business and a transfer of bullion result. I once saw in a night-*café* an intoxicated American pay away over ten dollars for little glasses of water, served as *kirsch*, which were ordered by him for the objects of his importunate hospitality.

The harmless decoction of camomile blossoms, to which a drop or two of milk has been added, makes a splendid substitute, in appearance, for the opaline absinthe. I knew a man who rather enjoyed passing for a heavy drinker of this strongly alcoholic fluid, who used to be served with camomile tea on the terrace of the Café Napolitain. He would drink six or seven glasses of this innocuous infusion amidst the astonished admiration of the boulevardiers. "*Bon Dieu*," they would say of him, "what an iron constitution that man has got. He will twist you the necks of six or seven parrots in the *apéritif* hour, and not turn a hair."

I remember writing about this to Sir Henry Irving, who in the rôle of Dubosc in *The Lyons Mail* is anachronologically supposed to be a great drinker of absinthe. Dubosc is to be recognised in the inn by his accomplices by his prowess with the absinthe bottle. I call this an anachronism because under the Directoire absinthe was not drunk at all in France. It was introduced into France after the wars in Algeria and Tunis. It was during those campaigns that the French

soldiers, unable to get any other kind of strong drink—for that was before the days of vine-growing in Africa—acquired the absinthe habit and brought their lethal vice back to France.

I suggested to Sir Henry that by using a decoction of camomile tea he would be able to appear to drink as many glasses of " blue " as he cared, and preserve that realism which was one of his artistic tenets.

Apropos of *The Lyons Mail*, I wonder how many English admirers of that play have read the book which was brought out some years ago by Monsieur Excoffon, the direct descendant of Excoffon, the courier of the particular coach which was attacked on that sinister day in Germinal of the Year IV. (1796). This Monsieur Excoffon feels very indignant at the sympathy shown for the " innocent Lesurques," and sets to work to prove that he was rightly convicted as the murderer of his ancestor. I must admit that he makes out a very good case against the " Martyr."

I was so much impressed by the book that I produced an adaptation of it in English, through Messrs Greening. It did not interest the British public at all. The British public had made up its mind that Lesurques was innocent, that Dubosc was the real murderer, and the result was that large quantities of my opus were remaindered at the reduced price of fourpence *per*. This was unfortunate for myself and Messrs Greening, but it gave me reason to admire the understanding possessed by Mr C. Arthur Pearson of the taste and interest of the British reader. Before I took up Monsieur Excoffon's book I had suggested to

Mr Pearson that an article on the subject would be of interest. "Everybody has admired Irving in *The Lyons Mail*," I remarked, "and everybody would like to hear the truth about the Lesurques fiction." Mr Pearson said: "I don't think the public would care anything at all about such an article. I myself, if I saw it in a magazine, should certainly skip it. There's nothing in the idea." I thought that Mr Pearson was wrong, and I wrote the book, *selon* Excoffon. "C. A. P." was, however, in the right. Nobody wanted to hear that "pore Lesurques" was guilty, and the book went to the shambles as described.

My first interest in the story of the Lyons Mail was aroused one day, several years ago, as I was riding from Montereau on the frontiers of Burgundy and the Ile de France to Melun. I had been to Montereau to see the bridge on which John the Fearless, Duke of Burgundy, was feloniously murdered by the French, and the sword of the dauntless duke, which hangs, rusting, to this day, in Montereau parish church.

The road which I followed on my way back to Paris was the same along which the bloody Dauphin and his crew of murderers had galloped post-haste, their eternal infamy consummated.

My mind was full of the strife of Burgundy, France, Armagnac and the English, and it had altogether escaped my memory that the way by which I had come had a more recent notoriety, acquired by the very evil deed of the murder of the Lyons Mail courier and his postboy. Yet since I had seen Sir Henry Irving in England, and Paulin Menier in France, in the play, *The Lyons*

Mail, based on this deed of blood, I had taken a great interest in the stories of Lesurques and Dubosc, of Lesurques because I fancied him guilty, Dubosc because I suspected his innocence. The case had often caused me to consider the question: Were you to be executed for a murder, would you rather go to the scaffold innocent or guilty?

Not very far from Melun, I noticed on the right-hand side of the highway an old-fashioned country inn, a centuries-old posting-house with a vast courtyard and stables, at the back of it, seen through the spacious archway of the gates. The front of this inn was painted white, on which, in black letters, were the words: "Stop Here. Our Wine is Good." In a little garden in front of the door some arum lilies were growing.

I reined in and alighted, tempted by the pleasant whiteness of this cool-looking house of call.

The room I entered, the kitchen of the inn, was dark and gloomy. Black rafters spanned the ceiling; there was there a mighty hearth; the furniture was of an old fashion. It was all just as it might have been in the Fourth Year of the One and Indivisible Republic.

Some rough-looking men, curiously attired and speaking in an uncouth dialect, whom I afterwards learned to be worthy Flemish harvesters, were sitting at a table drinking the famous blue wine of the house.

It pleased me to imagine for a moment that all this was taking place a century ago, that I was a belated traveller, and that this was one of the evil inns of coaching days.

Coaching days! These words awakened my

memories, and turning to the bustling landlady I said :

" Was it not somewhere near here that the famous attack on the Lyons Mail took place ? "

I had fully expected to see her shake her head and answer : " All that, sir, is politics, and we have enough to do without troubling about politics."

But no. She brightened up, and " Yes," she said. " You passed the very spot a few hundred yards from here down the road—one minute's trot of your dappled grey. All that used to be forest, which now is open fields. We call the spot the *Carrefour de l'Attaque* " (The Place of the Attack), " and when we pass that way we make the sign of the cross."

And added she : " What a scoundrel " (*quelle canaille*), " all the same, that fellow Lesurques."

" A scoundrel ? Lesurques ? " I cried. " The innocent Lesurques ? "

" Oh, innocent," said the landlady. " That, that is good to tell to children. For why ? We know him to have been guilty. Are you aware, sir," she added, " that this very inn was kept by Lesurques, and that it was only six weeks before the murder that he was turned out of this house by the bailiffs ? The courier used to change horses here."

We conversed.

" Ask at any of the old posting-inns between here and Paris," she added, " and you will hear the same opinion as to Lesurques's innocence. *C'est de la blague.*"

I followed her advice, and on my way back to

Paris that day I reined in at numerous *auberges* on the homeward road. And everywhere I found the tragic memory of the story of the Lyons Mail alive in these places, handed down from father to son, but nowhere did I find the story of Lesurques's innocence regarded otherwise than as the device of ingenious playwrights.

Excoffon's grievance is that his great-grandfather, who was murdered, was robbed at the same time of a large amount of property represented by jewels, the private fortune of the Excoffon family, in addition to seven millions of francs in assignats (worth in currency about five hundred and sixty pounds), thirteen thousand francs in coin (five hundred and twenty pounds), and a large number of drafts and orders. In fact the loss fell mainly on the courier, for, as will be seen, the whole of the plunder, apart from Excoffon's jewels, did not exceed eleven hundred pounds, plus a certain amount of paper, probably worthless. The writer of "Le Courrier de Lyon" says that it is a great shame that while everybody deplores the fate of the descendants of Lesurques, no sympathy has ever been shown for the Excoffon family, who were utterly ruined by the crime. He brings evidence to prove that there was no likeness whatever between Dubosc and the courier. Dubosc was short and "stumpy." Lesurques was a well-built man of middle height. Dubosc's eyes were black, Lesurques's eyes were of a vague colour. Lesurques had a shifty, Dubosc a bold look. Their hair was of different colours. Dubosc was made to put on a fair wig when he was being confronted with the witnesses who had sworn against Lesur-

ques. It gave him no resemblance whatever to the man who had been guillotined. The witnesses, who five years previously had convicted Lesurques, refused to admit that they had made a mistake. Excoffon bids us pay no attention whatever to the fact that Dubosc confessed himself guilty of the crime for which Lesurques suffered. He points out that Dubosc was already under sentence of death for eighteen different murders and highway robberies, so that it could not make things any worse for him to take on his shoulders the blame of any additional crime. Lesurques was the nephew of the powerful Conventionnel, Merlin de Douai, who, according to Excoffon, got Dubosc to make a statement clearing Lesurques, so as to remove the stain of dishonour from the family name. Dubosc had a helpmate to whom and to whose children he was deeply attached ; a promise was made to him that these should be cared for, after his execution, if he would only disculpate Lesurques, and he agreed to do so. It was on this confession, which was backed by no evidence whatever, that the legend of Lesurques's innocence and martyrdom was based. And the fact is that though innumerable attempts have been made by the Lesurques family to have the conviction set aside, and the convict's fortune restored to his descendants, nothing has been done beyond the granting of a small annuity to the descendants of his widow. A claim to be beneficiary of this annuity was recently put in by a woman in Paris, who, however, being unable to establish her kinship, was non-suited.

In this connection I was interested to learn that a

great many pensions and annuities are still honourably paid by the Treasury of the Republic, although the regimes under which these were granted have long since been swept away. The Ministry of Finance pays perpetual pensions to descendants of people to whom the annuity was originally assigned by Louis XIV. or Louis XV., by Napoleon I., and even monarchs of earlier date. It had seemed to me that at the time of the Revolution a pen would have been drawn through all these grants. But this was not done. The State is very honourable in fulfilling its obligations, or perhaps it is rather the spirit of routine which is so strongly developed in the French Government offices which has kept these annual donations in existence. I thought it interesting to note thatthe Socialistic Third Republic is paying pensions originally granted by the caprice of one or other of the Bourbons.

Some of these annuitants are people in very humble circumstances although of long lineage, the descendants of men (or more probably of women) who were in high favour at the Court of Versailles, and who modestly hide under a plebeian name some aristocratic title, content to draw their annual allowance and to live as *petits rentiers* on the posthumous bounties of forgotten kings.

If there are innumerable bogus noblemen and noblewomen in France to-day, there are also a number of people with the most bourgeois designations who have every right to use distinguished titles, titles which are intimately bound up with the history and glory of France. In Italy personal vanity is so much greater that any man who has a right to a title is sure to wear it, no matter how low

his condition may be. I had a Marquis dei Cittadini as porter of the house in which I lived on Santa Lucia in Naples thirty years ago, and the Marquis was very glad to earn a few coppers by cobbling shoes in the little lodge which was his official residence.

Another cobbling marquis of high lineage is pointed out to this day to visitors to Venice. His little shop is in one of the side streets, and his name is Marquis Rispingoli. He is the direct descendant of the Marquis Rispingoli of whom Stendhal relates an anecdote in his "Notes" for 1816. A certain stranger—so Stendhal tells—who had been spending several months in Venice, remarked in presence of a number of people: "I am leaving Venice fully satisfied. I have been loved by the most beautiful woman in this city." The next morning this man was called on by Marquis Rispingoli, who was followed by a lackey carrying a large box of pistols. The marquis had come to challenge the stranger to mortal combat. "In boasting that you have been loved by the most beautiful woman in Venice," he said, "you have insulted the lady whom I admire and whom I consider to merit that description." It appears that the lady whom Rispingoli loved was a woman of over fifty years of age, and remarkably plain-looking. But love makes people blind, they say. Rispingoli, the cobbler, gets many customers because of the story of his ancestor's gallantry, and, as he supplies a good article at a reasonable price, is doing very well. He leads a happy life in his little shop, and never regrets the marble palace of his family which mirrors its columns in the blue lagoon. Yet he

keeps his name and title and likes to be addressed as " Signor Marchese."

I suppose there is some satisfaction in terms of respect. I suppose it is pleasant to be called " Signor Marchese," or " My lord," or " Sir So-and-So." People do seem to hanker after these distinctions. The other day I heard of a man in Tysoe in Warwickshire—a poor, labouring man—who announced his intention of christening his son by the name of " Mister." When he was asked why he had selected so extraordinary an appellation for his boy, he said : " I want people to call him ' Mister.' I never was called ' Mr ' in my life. It was always ' Gearge, come here,' or ' Gearge, go there.' Never was it ' Mr Brown.' Well, now, if I call my son ' Mister ' by his Christian name, he is bound to be talked of and addressed as ' Mister Brown,' and so he will have a respect shown him which I never enjoyed."

Of course, in France, Mr Brown would not have been able to indulge this fancy. You are not allowed to bestow on any child a name which does not figure in the official calendar of saints. The list is a very long one, and the selection large, because there are more than thirteen thousand official saints. But the name must be one of these. You may not give a family patronymic as one of the Christian names, as we are so fond of doing in England. I remember the indignation of an English resident in Paris who wished to bestow on his son two or three Christian names derived from families with which he was connected, " Ponsonby, de Tomkins, Vavasour," or something similar. The clerk at the mayor's office, where the

father went to make his declaration of the birth of the child and of the names under which it was to be registered, indignantly refused to enter these patronymics as *noms de baptême*. He said that there was no saint in the calendar with such a designation as "Ponsonby," and that he was not surprised at it. As to "de Tomkins," he described that as a name *à coucher dehors* (enough to make a man go and sleep in the open). The Englishman stormed and argued, but to no purpose, and the child was finally registered simply as Arthur, for which, no doubt, later on in life, he was grateful to that clerk in the Parisian *mairie*.

I remember discussing the incident with the father in question, and telling him that if the lad were intended to live in France it was perhaps just as well that he had been unable to give him the name of Vavasour. This eminently aristocratic appellation in England is in France almost a term of contempt. A *vavasour* was the vassal of a vassal, quite the bottom thing in the feudal social scale. Many of our most "classy" designations in England mean in the original French something very mean and low. The reason of this is that William the Conqueror made up his army of invasion of all the riff-raff of Normandy. Thus "Talbot" means nothing more than a woodcutter, and is derived from the French words, "Taillebois," synonymous with Nethinim in the year 1066.

With the calendar of saints to select from the French parent is at liberty to use any name, male or female, for his child, be it a boy or a girl. I know dozens of Frenchmen who are called Mary.

You may christen your boy "John Sarah Jane," or "William Ernestine," if you are so inclined. I remember once receiving letters from a person who signed, "L. Felicie Durand." They were very complimentary epistles, about some work I had done, and I flattered myself that at last I had made a conquest. "L. Felicie," however, turned out to be a middle-aged man with spectacles and a beard.

CHAPTER XIII

A Village Christening—The Man with the Iron Hook—Pierre Louÿs as Godfather—Perfumes and the Voice—A Brittany Village—*Très ramasseuse*—Matches and Tinder-boxes—Breton Maid-servants—Marguérite the Faithful—Authorship under Difficulties—*Belles Lettres* and Business—Genius and Seclusion—The Six Weeks of Hugo and of Napoleon—The Decay of Literature—Fame at Sixty Pounds—The Bretons and Normans—Neighbours in Normandy—The Four Generations—*Grand'mère* and the Forest—Looting the Sward—*Grand'mère* and the Lilies of the Valley—Her End

As a Protestant, I was obliged during my residence in France to refuse invitations to stand as *parrain* (godfather) at the christenings of children, for my French friends were all Catholics. Indeed, although I lived nearly twenty-five years in France, I never succeeded in getting to like a French Protestant, or in being liked by one. They are a peculiar race, which I should describe as cold and unsympathetic.

The priests would not, of course, hear of me, a Protestant and a foreigner, as godfather to a French Catholic child, and indeed carried their distrust to the point of raising objections to the choice of my wife—a good Catholic—as godmother, for they feared that she might be under my influence, and that through her, so influenced, the seeds of heresy might be sown in the child's bosom.

On one occasion, however, down at Auvers-sur-Oise, the *curé* agreed to accept her *marraine*, provided a suitable godfather could be found, a man of the Catholic faith. I fancy that what influenced the *curé* was that the child—a little girl—

was the daughter of very poor parents, and that he did not wish to stand in its light, because in France a godmother takes a much more serious view of her relationship towards her godchild, especially with regard to its material interests, than is done in England.

The little girl was the daughter of a one-armed man who lived with his wife and numerous family in a dwelling installed in a cave, by the side of the road from Chaponval to Auvers, an abode which he enjoyed rent-free—as no landlord had any claim to the place. In front of his cave-dwelling was a plot of ground, for which he paid a trifling rent. On the proceeds of his labours on this smallest of holdings he was able to maintain himself and his family. As I have said, he had only one arm ; a hook attached to a stump replaced the other. He was a most industrious and resourceful man. In spite of his infirmity he found employment with the farmers whenever his market gardening gave him leisure. I have seen him climbing trees, lopping branches ; I have met him on the road to Pontoise trundling a barrow laden with market produce. Such taxes as he had to pay, he discharged in labour, for in France the *corvée*—that relic of pre-Revolution days—still obtains, and one may pay one's dues to the Commune, or State, by manual labour, on the high-roads, just as under the feudal system one paid one's due to the lord and master with so many days of *corvée*.

I had a very high opinion of the rough little man, and I was glad to help him with the christening of his child, the ninth or tenth of his family.

The godmother being found, it devolved on me to provide a godfather, and this might have been no easy task. The part of godfather involves a certain amount of expense. It is the duty of the *parrain* to pay the costs of the christening, and it is expected of him that he should make a present to the godmother. On the other hand it is the parents who are generally supposed to provide the repast, and to furnish those boxes of *dragées* (sugar almonds) which are an essential feature of the French christening festivity. In this instance, seeing the stark poverty of the parents, the whole cost would have to be borne by the godparents.

However, meeting that same day my friend Pierre Louÿs, who later acquired a world-wide reputation as the author of "Aphrodite," and many other works, at my suggestion that it might amuse him to take part in this humble rustic baptismal festivity he readily accepted. In this way the child of those very lowly cave-dwellers was "held over the baptismal founts" (to use the consecrated French expression) by one of the most distinguished of French writers, a future Academician.

I was allowed to be present at the ceremony, but as a spectator only. As such I joined in the procession which started amidst the concourse of the village from the mouth of the roadside cave. The godfather gave his arm to the godmother, a fiddler walked ahead. The parents followed, and then, two by two, the rest of the family and the invited guests.

As the heretic I walked in the rear of the procession, accompanied by my perfumed tenant, who, as the wind was blowing in the stern, swathed

the whole cortège in dulcet odours. I remember that that morning his voice appeared particularly hoarse, and that I asked him whether he was not suffering from cold. He answered in the negative, and added that this perpetual affection of the vocal chords was another of the drawbacks of his trade. "People say that I have the hoarse voice" (*la voix de rogomme*) "of the absinthe-drinker, which is rather hard on me. The fact is that the scents at which I work produce this chronic huskiness."

It is, by the way, a well-known fact that certain perfumes have a disastrous effect on the voice. Most opera-singers know this and have their several dislikes for various scents. The Countess de Miranda (Christine Nillson) will tolerate no flowers of any kind in her house. Madame Isaac of the Opéra Comique declares that all scented flowers, except roses, are injurious to the voice, and especially mimosa, violets and lilac. Madame Emma Calvé describes white lilac as the worst flower of all in this respect, but Delmas, the basso of the Opéra, gives the palm of badness to hyacinths and tuberoses. Every doctor who has been attached to the French Conservatoire, and the list of physicians includes such names as Glover, Fauvel, Poyet and Gougenheim, agrees that perfumes injure the voice. Madame Renée Richard, who instructs pupils in singing, forbade the young ladies to wear any flowers in their corsage, even a simple penny bunch of violets. "After inhaling even the faint perfume from such a bouquet, on the way between their homes and my house," she declares, "they seem unable to emit a single note. I have examined the throats of some of the girls whom I found in this

condition, and by the use of the laryngoscope discovered that the vocal chords were swollen and congested." At the Conservatoire the professors used to tell their pupils to avoid scents, and scented flowers, as they would poison. Faure, the great singer, speaks with especial bitterness about the violet as a voice-destroyer, but lilies and mimosa he describes as also very harmful. These facts are so well known to most singers that many artists have a nervous horror of flowers. Madame Péan, the wife of the celebrated physician, once saw a leading opera singer, who was to appear at a matinée, stagger and turn deadly pale as he was going on to the stage. She ran forward, thinking that the man had been taken ill, and learned that his condition arose from the fact that he had noticed a lady in a back row of the stalls holding a large bouquet of flowers, and that he anticipated being unable to utter a single sound in consequence. The fact that the bouquet was composed of artificial flowers did not alter his apprehensions.

Pierre Louÿs did things very handsomely as godfather, and boxes of *dragées* were distributed with profusion amongst the guests and relations. Also large bags of the same sweets were carried by various persons in the procession, and sugared largesse was scattered amongst the crowds that lined the village street to see us go by. The fact that a distinguished Parisian gentleman, known to be the brother of a high French official, and grandson of the physician to Napoleon I., had consented to act as godfather to the child of the man with the iron hook, who lived in a cave, invested this ceremony with great public interest.

The best box of sweets was reserved for the *curé*, but it differed from the others by the fact that besides the sugar almonds it contained a couple of louis d'or. It is in this way that the priest is recompensed for his services, the amount of the fee depending on the generosity and means of the *parrain*.

When the ceremony was over we adjourned to the neighbouring inn, where a *répas* was served, of which the main features were black puddings, mashed potatoes and white wine. After the feast there was a dance, and I greatly admired the agility and *verve* of the man with the iron hook. He said that to have such a christening encouraged a father of a family, and hoped that for each fresh child that might be born in his cave a godfather as kindly and generous might be forthcoming.

Many of my most pleasant recollections of France are connected with life in the country, amidst simple, homely people, and in the most modest of surroundings. It is in the villages that one sees the real life of the nation. It is amongst the villagers that one finds the true characteristics of the race.

In my selection of country places to which to go when I desired to get away from the strain and turmoil of Paris, I used to be guided by hazard alone. Sometimes the name of a place would attract me. It was thus that one day I set off for a village called St Laurent on the Brittany coast. The name seemed attractive, though the journey from Paris was a very tedious one. St Laurent proved itself to be a hamlet perched on the edge of the cliff, and I do not think that any-

where in the territory of the Republic can there be a worse inn than the *auberge* there, which was the only place where any accommodation could be obtained. Beyond black bread, cider and salt pork there was little or nothing to eat and drink. But a few instructive days were all the same afforded by the short stay I made there. I learned with what extreme economy the Breton peasants live. I saw the women making the soup which is the staple of their dinner. The iron *marmite* was slung on a tripod over the open hearth; beneath it a fire was kindled, from sticks collected by the roadside, the light being obtained from flint, steel and tinder. Into the pot, filled with water, various vegetables, cut up small, were thrown, and to this an iron spoonful of lard was added. And that was all. This broth, eaten with quantities of brown bread (*pain bis*) was the principal meal of the sturdy fellows whom I saw working in the fields or toiling in the fishing-smacks.

The Breton woman loves gleaning. As she walks along she picks up anything that seems to have the least utility or value. I have made reference to my housekeeper, Madame Gloux, a Breton of St Malo. I have often noticed her out walking. She keeps her eyes on the ground or on the hedge-rows. Any plant that can be used in a salad will be plucked and disposed of in the basket without which she never goes abroad. No fragment of wood will be left lying in the road. "*Je suis très ramasseuse*" (I am very much given to picking up things) is her confession, and every Breton woman that I have seen could say the same thing.

The Brittany cider is a nauseous fluid. The peasants dilute the fermented apple juice with water in the proportion of three parts to one of cider. They have a conviction that the best water for this purpose should be taken from a stagnant pool, and the result can be imagined. This mixture is generically described as "*boisson*." I should describe it by another name.

I never saw a match used in any of the cottages in St Laurent. Indeed there were no matches to be purchased in that hamlet. Everybody used a tinder-box, the reason being that it is by far the most economical way of obtaining fire. There is much to be said in favour of the *briquet*, for use by smokers, as the wind has no effect on the operation, and I remember that before starting on a voyage to South America I provided myself with a flint and steel and several yards of tinder-fuse, thanks to which I was always able to light pipe, cigar, or cigarette on deck even in the stormiest of weathers.

Of late there have been introduced into France those chemical tinder-boxes of cerium alloy which are so popular in England. To these the Régie representing the monopoly for the manufacture of matches at once raised the strongest objection; the sale and use of these *briquets chimiques* were declared illegal, and remained so in the eyes of the authorities until a law imposing a tax on these articles had been rushed through two Chambers. Nowadays by paying two francs for a cerium-box made of nickel or steel, five francs for a silver, and sixteen shillings for a gold one, one may dispense with the dreadful Régie matches.

Before the use of these *briquets* was legalised,

and the Inland Revenue men were on the look-out for people defrauding the Régie by lighting their cigars, not with the almost uninflammable matches supplied by the State, but with these ingenious appliances, one of these officials noticed a well-dressed man who was walking along the boulevards pull one of the forbidden boxes out of his pocket and twice make use of it. He rushed up, notebook in hand. "I have caught you *in flagrante delicto*, my fine fellow," he cried, "and I must trouble you for your name and address."

It appeared that the offender was no less a person than the Minister of Finances himself. Even he could not resist the temptation to avoid the annoyance of the Government matches.

After exhausting the interest which St Laurent afforded to an observer I moved down to a cottage on the hillside at the Legué near St Brieuc. It was a small house situated in a large garden. I immediately became a personage of great importance, and I discovered that the house was known in the township as the "chateau." I figured consequently as "the gentleman who lives in the castle," and enjoyed the envy and respect of the population.

My staff of retainers in the castle consisted of a sturdy Breton peasant-girl, Marguérite by name, who was the hardest-working and most devoted woman I have ever met with. I brought her back to Paris with me, but the characteristic uncleanliness of the Bretons made it impossible to keep her as a servant in a Parisian apartment, and so we parted. She used to declare that water was contrary to her ("*l'eau m'est contraire*"), and nothing

would induce her to take a bath. She objected even to washing her face and hands, and when she did clean herself it was with the end of a towel dipped in alcohol. I had been told that the Bretons only take two baths in a lifetime, the first just after they are born, and the second on the eve of their marriage, but I really did not know that they were quite so uncleanly as I discovered poor Marguérite to be. This defect apart, the girl, like all the women of her race, had many excellent qualities. Your Breton servant has all the blind, unreasoning fidelity of the feudal vassal to his *seigneur*. I could better understand the Vendée after I had observed Marguérite's conduct towards me. For after she had left my service, she still seemed to consider me in the light of her master and protector. Whenever she got into any trouble at her new place she used to rush to me to complain and to consult. "Is it right, my master," she once came to ask me, "that I should be forced to pay twelve shillings out of my wages for a teaspoon, which *she* says I lost down the sink?" I was always her master, and I was made to feel that I had the responsibility of her life, interests and happiness. She did not—as I could have wished—transfer her allegiance to her new employers. I was the original *seigneur*, the others were interlopers, usurpers of the parental authority which had been mine. When she was getting married she asked me to be one of her witnesses, and at the birth of her first child she begged me to stand as godfather. For years afterwards she wrote to us telling us of her concerns, asking our advice, and carrying her confidence so

far as to beg us to keep her savings in our custody. I have met with other instances, though none so pronounced, of the fidelity of the Bretons.

I spent some months in St Malo and whilst there was able to write a book which won appreciation in different parts of the world on account of the way it was written. I mention this fact merely to illustrate what I have always held to be true—namely, that the poorer a man's surroundings are the better literary work he will produce. This particular book was written under circumstances which one might consider fatal to literary work of any kind. I had come to St Malo on my way to Pont-Aven, that Brittany resort of artists and writers of which both Conder the painter and Dowson the poet had told me so much. But on reaching St Malo I was too ill to proceed. My means being very small, after a succession of disasters, I was forced to take the most humble of lodgings. My *chambre garnie* was in the Grande Rue, and was above a small grocery shop. I spent many dreadful days in my lonely lodging, and when I was well enough to go downstairs, I used, for the sake of human companionship, to go and sit in the grocery. This was kept by a widow woman, with whom I made friends, and whom I used to help in her business, serving customers, putting up the shutters and so on. In return for these small services she allowed me to sit at the desk in the shop, and here it was that I began and finished the little book which was afterwards much talked about. One would have supposed such conditions to be most unfavourable, the noise of the street, the chatter of the customers,

the constant interruptions. As a matter of fact I found all these stimulating. There is a certain passage in that book which has been much admired and which has been described as literature. I was sitting at the desk in the grocery shop when I began that passage, and while in the midst of it an officer in uniform came into the place. The shop-woman was out. I was minding the business for her, and had just served a coal-heaver with a pickled herring "with plenty of vinegar," all wrapped up in a piece of brown paper. The officer was angry, and taking me for somebody connected with the firm, rated me, saying: "I am not at all satisfied with the coffee you have been selling me. My orderly tells me that there is gravel mixed up with the berries, so that when he grinds it, the coffee-mill gets damaged."

I laid my pen down and said: "I am truly sorry, *mon capitaine*, to hear your complaint. It is not and never has been the usage of this house to mix gravel or analogous products with its coffee, for which I may inform you we enjoy an enviable reputation. To convince you of this fact I will now proceed to grind before your eyes with the coffee-mill, which is screwed down to the counter over there, a certain portion of the coffee which you have been in the habit of purchasing here, and I think I shall be able to convince you that the operation will be smooth and satisfactory in every respect."

I was able to satisfy the captain of our *bona fides*, and, having supplied him with his requirements, bowed him out of the shop, carrying his brown-paper parcel in his hand, and then returned to the

desk, where I picked up my pen again and continued, until its completion, the passage which some have been good enough to praise.

Many French writers of talent have told me that they can work nowhere better than in a *café*, that at home in the silence and solitude of their rooms they experience no flow of ideas.

Genius, on the other hand, seems to require seclusion. Victor Hugo told me that the propinquity of human beings unsettled him, and rendered composition impossible. "When I was writing 'Notre Dame de Paris,'" he told me, "I shut myself up in my room and never left it for six weeks, that is to say until the book was finished."

Napoleon, when at Brienne, used sometimes to seclude himself in the same way. On one occasion, when engaged in some arduous course of study, he confined himself for a similar period of six weeks. His food used to be left outside the door of his room. His slops he emptied out of the window. The student who occupied the room immediately below him objected, so it is related, most strongly to these domestic arrangements of the future master of the world, and complained to the authorities. It is said that Napoleon's rage was terrible on being remonstrated with, so terrible that during the rest of his cadetship at the military school none of his comrades ever dared to take exception to anything that he chose to do.

Six weeks, by the way, was the period fixed by George Gissing as the minimum in which a skilled writer could produce a novel of the average length, and twice six weeks as the average life of the book when produced.

I doubt very much whether the life of the average French novel is as long. A very large number of still-born works are issued every year from the French publishing houses. In France it confers social distinction to be the author of a book, to have been mentioned in the papers as such. Many society women, who could gain distinction in no other way, enter upon authorship as a means to pre-eminence. An ordinary yellow-back French novel can be produced for about forty pounds, and another hundred pounds spent in advertising, though it may not help to sell the book, will make the authoress known as such. There are many prominent French papers which will insert a leading article, extolling a work of fiction, and decking its author with flowers, for the fee of sixty pounds. This detail I learned from Jean Lorrain. Asked about literary criticism in France of the day, he answered: "Criticism? It exists no longer. Articles in the newspaper at sixty pounds apiece have taken its place. It is the women authors who are ready to pay the highest prices. I could name you one who asked me to write an article about a book of hers in a paper with which I was connected, and who offered to propose a fee of fifteen hundred francs to the advertising manager. I refused the work. She was a woman without any talent."

On the same occasion he said: "Literature is dying in France and we are looking on. The public cares for nothing but what is topical. It requires literature dealing with current news. Journalism has killed the literature of imagination. Formerly a newspaper editor never dictated the

subject. To-day he has the audacity to tell a novelist what he is to write about. I know one editor who won't take anything but stories about *apaches* (hooligans). I hardly dare tell you what was suggested to me by another editor as a fitting subject for a serial which he wanted me to write."

On the other hand Octave Mirbeau remarked the other day: "We have far too much literature in France. We are being choked in literature."

He was referring no doubt to those writers of whom Lorrain said that their glory was manufactured for them in the *salons* of Maurice Barrés and of Léon Daudet. "Any silly little woman of the faubourg St Germain can become a literary celebrity nowadays."

These celebrities get talked about, and figure in drawing-rooms as personages of importance. But nobody reads their books. So that these might rank as classics, according to Oscar Wilde's definition: "The classics are books about which everybody talks, but which nobody reads."

With regard to the character of the Bretons, I have often wished that some writer, gifted with the observation of a de Maupassant but with more kindliness in his disposition and mansuetude in his judgments, might arise to describe this interesting people with the minuteness with which the immortal Guy dealt with his fellow-countrymen, the Normans. It is certain that he would have faults much less glaring to expose. The Breton is not cleanly, he is terribly obstinate, and his superstitiousness is proverbial. But he has at least the family instinct, the clan spirit, and a great loyalty to his parents and those who stand

towards him in parental authority. These are qualities which are rare amongst the Normans, and rarer still in other parts of France. The murder of parents who are no longer able to work and have become a charge to their children, to whom they have surrendered their property, which is common enough in other parts of France, is in Brittany an almost unheard-of crime. Zola could not have laid the scene of "La Terre" in Brittany; the Bretons would not have afforded him a target for his shafts. Maupassant could not have indulged his spleen and his misanthropy at their expense, as he did with such effect at the cost of his fellow-Normans.

The Norman is cunning, selfish, litigious and sceptical, without enthusiasm or ideality, and individualistic rather than clannish. As such he affords a splendid subject for treatment by the pen of a cynic.

I lived several years in Normandy, and what particularly irritated me about the character of the inhabitants was that it is almost impossible to get from them a direct answer to a straight question. You ask a Norman if he be going to do such and such a thing, if this or that is going to happen, if he will consent to something or other. You rarely if ever hear him answer "Yes" or "No." He evades your question. He is hypothetical. A favourite mode of reply of his is: "*Peut-être ben que oui, peut-être ben que non*" (Very possibly, yes; very possibly, no). He prides himself on being cunning (*finaud*). His personal gain, the acquisition of property, are the lodestars of his existence.

In a small town in Normandy, where I once lived,

my neighbours in the cottage which adjoined mine afforded me the opportunity of studying the development of a Norman family. Four generations were represented by the occupants of this small house. There was the great-grandmother, an old peasant-woman, who wore wooden clogs and tied a kerchief over her grey locks. Her son, who was the one-legged porter at the town hospital, and who on Sundays wore a top-hat and frock-coat, represented the next stage upwards towards the bourgeoisie rank. His son and daughter-in-law were already registered as *des gens comme il faut*, people of the upper class, almost aristocrats in that little town. The young man was clerk in a big factory of electrical appliances ; his wife got her *modes* and dresses at the big Paris department stores. She could not bear the idea of patronising the local shops or workwomen. The fourth generation was incarnated in a little girl, who was decked out in laces and ribbons like a princess.

Grand'mère and I often used to chat together as we walked side by side through the fields on our way to the forest. I, thither to moon, the old woman to gather sticks. *Grand'mère* had never abandoned the laboriousness of her youth, albeit her children had progressed in the world. This very aged woman was the domestic slave of the household. It was she who scrubbed the floors, it was she who did the washing, it was she who went to collect firewood for the stove. Every day I have seen her toiling home bearing a huge fardel of sticks upon her bowed back. I could see her working at very early hours in the morning in the plot of ground behind the cottage. When spring

came, *Grand'mère* used to watch the sward in the forest, for early flowers, because for these she could always get a price in the market. There were large patches in this forest where on a certain day the whole ground was covered with lilies of the valley. These flowers peeped out at sunrise, but ere the night came every sprig had gone, and the beauty place was as bare as though devouring locusts had passed that way. I used always to feel a grudge against these looters of the woods, for I felt that I had been robbed of my rights of man, not to be allowed to see a single lily of the valley under the trees. And I learned afterwards that old *Grand'mère* was of these flower-harvesters the most energetic. It was she who rifled all my breathing spring. I christened her "*La Terreur du Muguet.*" She knew exactly the day on which these flowers would bud, and on that morning she used to rise before a soul was stirring. Then, carrying a big basket, she would hurry away before daylight to the wood, and in the silent glade decrepit old age would hurl itself upon fragrant new-born beauty. I followed her one morning and in the early dawn saw a picture which I shall not forget. How swift, how greedily she worked, the clawlike fingers mowing down the dainty stems. It was like the spectre of death let loose in a children's playground. It was like an inky cloud passing over the starry firmament, slowly, and one by one, blackening out each white and luminous orb.

"*Que voulez-vous, mon bon monsieur* ?" (What would you, dear sir ?) she said to me one day when I told her that God sends flowers into the woods

to be the delight of the dryads. "Ha'pence must be got, and for each bunch of these lilies of the valley, when they first come out, I can get in market from six to nine *sous*."

One sad afternoon poor old *Grand'mère* was cut to pieces by the Transatlantic express, on the level crossing near our house on her way to the forest. Her body was mangled out of recognition. At the hospital her son declared from the look of the old woman's clothes that she must be some tramp woman, "something not very important." It was his own mother. They identified the remains later when her clogs were found.

It was a sad coincidence that her body should have been taken to the hospital. She often used to say to me that all she hoped about her death was that under no circumstances would her remains be carried to the "amphitheatre." Anything but that, she used to say.

CHAPTER XIV

Grandma's Peripatetic Pessimism—My Consolations—Wrinkles of Gladness—Presbytia, a Kindly Dispensation—*In Excelsis*—The Weeping that never stopped—Her Grace's Toothache—Disturbed in doing Nothing—Cocaine for the Trouble—The Truth Out—The Homage of the Great—Unpleasantness concealed—" Going South "—A Night's *Rencontre*—Germans and Titles—A Barony for Eight Shillings and Fivepence—The Flowers of the Desert—Donkeys and Camels—Sven Hedin, his Thirst and his Collar-studs—The Interviewer, the Dictionary and the Dress Suit—An Enthusiast at the Pyramids—The Two Nights of Mr Dow Covington—*Nobiliary* Distinctions and the French

In our frequent walks together from our neighbouring cottages to the forest, *Grand'mère* and I used to discuss many things. She was learned in household matters and could describe wonderful methods of saving money by avoiding expense. She taught me recipes enough to fill a book, of which some were pleasant and useful, while others were repugnant. Her particular methods, for instance, of slaughter in the poultry yard were not agreeable to listen to, and I often thought that I would rather see a poor rabbit in the claws of a stoat than being got ready for a stew in the hands of kindly old Grandma. And as to the way of her country for killing ducks for the table, I used to tell her that she deserved the terrors of the Gramont law, that ineffectual act by which cruelty to animals is punished in France.

It was more alluring to listen to her discourse on the hundred and one simples of which she knew,

and whose beneficent properties she could describe. She had in varieties of herb tea remedies for almost every evil, from sleeplessness (for which she prescribed camomile) to the fever which results from chill, for which she said there was nothing more effective than a potion made of borage.

She told me stories of her remote youth, of the brave way in which she used to dance the *bourrée* in her native Auvergne, of the conquests she had made, and of how at last her heart had been won by a bearded sapper. "I had him in my blood," she told me, and I noted the expression.

For her children she seemed to have no affection. "They do not love me," she said, "why therefore should I trouble about them?" When I pointed out to her that she showed signs of much devotion to her descendants by toiling for them in the way she did, in spite of her great age and infirmities, she laughed and said that if she stopped working they would very soon turn her out of doors. Her exact expression was: "They would soon send me into the road to see if they were there." She concluded that when a man or a woman has had his or her day, it is best for them to clear the board, to disappear, to cumber the earth no longer, to leave their share of the soup for those who can work. But she reverted to the hope that she might never be carried to the hospital after she was dead.

She seemed distressed by the ills and ailments of her advanced age, and I always tried to find comfort for her in an amiable philosophy. I told her that she must not admit that she was old, that it was a grave imprudence ever to express the opinion that *La Camarde* (Death) had forgotten one.

I pointed down the valley to a distant chateau which raised its turrets above the trees, and I said : " There once lived there a very old *seigneur*, who one day at the Court of Versailles was addressed by an aged dame, who said to him : ' Marquis, I often fancy that Death has overlooked us two.' ' Hush ! Hush ! ' said the old gentleman, putting his finger to his lips. ' Let us not remind him.' "

" But what use is it to a woman to be living," she asked, " when her face is furrowed with wrinkles ? "

" Dear *Grand'mère*," I said, " there you have spoken words of ingratitude. It is one of the injustices which humanity commits against life and Providence ever to be complaining of the wrinkles which mark the faces of people who have lived a long while. Not all those creases in the skin were caused by sorrow or tears. There are many joy-wrinkles, we must remember. Some are caused by laughing loud and long, some of the pleats about the mouth come from frequent kissing. I might trace your sapper there and there, and elsewhere where you pressed your lips to the soft cheeks of your baby children. And there are wrinkles which come from ample feasting, and there is the furrow which is drawn by the draining of glasses, of glasses filled with cool golden cider or sparkling ruby wine. In fact," I added, " the state of being wrinkled should make rather for self-congratulation than morbid and complaining regret."

" But then, my eyes," she continued. " *Foutus*, my eyes."

" And that again is ingratitude," I said.

" No, no," said she. " It is, wait, I have the

word, a queer word. I have it on the tip of my tongue. The oculist man at Rouen told me it, when he asked me for five francs for a pair of glasses and I told him that five francs were not found in a mule's hoof . . ."

"Was the word 'presbytia'?" I asked.

"Yes, there you have it. I knew it was the sort of word to make you want to sleep out of doors. Presbytia. Yes, that's it. And now, my good sir, can you tell me where I am to find comfort in having pres . . . pres . . . well, you know."

"Presbytia? It is what comes to all old people more or less. It is far-sightedness. It enables you to see a very long way off. The older you grow, the farther off you can discern objects. A very wise dispensation of Nature. When you are very old and feeble, is it not a great advantage for you to be able to see people and things a long way off. Supposing we were living in a savage state, would you not find it useful to be able to descry ever so far away the enemy—let us say, the scalp-hunter, the wolf, or the bear, hungry for prey? You would have ample time to get back into the sheltering recesses of your cave or to climb up into your hiding-place in the refuge of the forest tree before the enemy's approach."

"Well, certainly, I must admit that seeing a long way off is useful. For instance, if when I am crossing the fields I see the *curé* coming, I can always dodge behind a hedge or hayrick before he sees me. I am glad to avoid him, for one thing because I am sure he brings me bad luck, and, besides that, he is always threatening me with terrible things that are to happen to me after my

death, because I haven't been to confession, because I have stayed away from Mass. As if I had time to go to Mass, with all the scrubbing to do, the soup to cook and wood to be got in from the forest."

Grand'mère's mangled remains were buried at little cost and with no great display of mourning or respect. The higher virtues are usually attributed to the lower classes ; in that particular part of France I did not find much to support this contention. Filial piety was singularly lacking to these people. " She had had her day. Therefore why should we make bad blood for ourselves at her loss " was what her son, the one-legged porter, remarked to me while discussing the meagre funeral arrangements and the general cheerfulness of the old woman's descendants at the hasty ceremony.

Because *Grand'mère* was poor, her death was not regretted. Her family never remembered her years and years of self-sacrificing devotion, her servitude to them which had lasted three quarters of a century. There is a Spanish proverb which says that it is the lean cat which gets all the fleas. The poor have through life every suffering ; and after death they have no honour nor regrets.

I could not help remembering this great indifference to the old woman's fate when later I witnessed the grief which was provoked amongst his friends and in Parisian society by the death of a worthless young man—a death which was morally suicide. But this young man was a duke, and through his wife he was very wealthy.

I was staying in what ranks as the most fashionable hotel in Paris—a hotel which is not advertised

but is well known in those exalted regions in which at that time I was planing. It was on a Thursday, I remember, and I was seated late at night in my sitting-room doing the sort of things that one does when one has nothing to do. And then there broke out overhead a low, wailing cry—like the moaning cry of the chorus in a Greek tragedy. Grief, sorrow, pain, and especially any public manifestation of these emotions are so unusual in the spheres to which I have alluded that my surprise was great. As the noise—a most unpleasant noise, most annoying, so late at night—continued steadily, and without interruption, my surprise grew into indignation. Here was I, doing nothing, and there was somebody disturbing me in so doing.

The disturbance continued all night, unceasingly, and when my man brought me my morning coffee, *brioches*, cigarettes, fruit, *petit verre*, and well-aired copy of the morning's *Gil Blas*, I could still hear it. I did not wish to be disturbed at breakfast, nor to have my attention drawn away from the characteristic anecdotes which in French papers of that class replace vulgar news about vulgar people and things. So I told my valet to go at once to the manager and to inform him of the circumstances, how I had been annoyed all night by somebody crying overhead, how the noise was still proceeding, and to add that I was not accustomed to being exposed to that sort of thing in hotels which I patronised, and that unless it was stopped at once . . .

The manager sent back most respectful compliments and the expressions of profoundest regret. The disturbance was most annoying; nobody

admitted that more readily than he. The circumstances, however, were most unfortunate. The suite above the one which I honoured with my presence was occupied, I must be informed, by a lady of the highest rank, a duchess, in other words, and, well the fact was that *Sa Seigneurie* had got very bad toothache. The manager however understood that the lady's dentist, a leading specialist residing in London, had been telegraphed for and was then on his way to Paris, and that no doubt within a very few hours the trouble would have been got rid of.

With this explanation I was obliged to be content, and so grumblingly resigned myself to the prospect of nervous strain for some further hours. Having made this great moral effort I was pleased to jest with my man, who on my travels was a valet, but at home was stud-groom.

He answered in the same vein and said that when a man has been thrown as many times as he had been, both with the Pytchley and the Quorn, and has had every tooth in his head knocked out, he does not suffer in that way.

I told him that the French call toothache *mal d'amour* (the pain of love), and asked him to try and think out why.

The noise went on overhead during the whole of the two hours which I devoted to my toilet, and when I returned to rest after my ride in the Bois, before descending to luncheon, it was still as persistent as ever.

I seriously thought of sending my compliments up to her ladyship, and of suggesting that a few drops of an equal mixture of ether and eau-de-

Cologne, introduced with the point of a hairpin into the cavity, might remove the unpleasantness. My man favoured the alternative suggestion of advising her Grace to drink a couple of glasses of porter and at the same time to put a plug of cotton-wool soaked in laudanum into "her earhole," but I did not know how she would appreciate such democratic prescriptions.

And then a sinister thing occurred. A lady's maid who formed one of the suite remarked: "The very best thing for her Grace *would be a little cocaine.*"

I remembered this remark next day when the real cause of the poor woman's troubles became known to the world.

The crying lasted all the Friday and well on into the night. Next morning the whole world heard the news which had been so carefully concealed that not a soul in the hotel beyond the manager and a few of the staff were in the secret.

The apartment over mine had been occupied by a French duke and his young American bride. The duke had married, after a wild career, to settle down in life; the woman had consented to become a duchess at a great money sacrifice on her father's part. The husband had lived after his wedding as he had lived before it. One of his passions was for crapulous orgies, another was the drug habit of taking injections of cocaine. For several days before the Thursday night he had been away from home, *en vadrouille* (on the spree). To "buck himself up" before returning to his bride he had used his favourite drug. He had come back home that night, and had dropped dead in his wife's

presence within a few minutes of his entry. And she had mourned him ever since, mourned him bitterly, mourned him with persistence. For more than thirty-six hours the poor girl had cried and cried.

On the Saturday, after his death had been made known, a register was placed in the hall of the hotel, and all day long carriages and motors drove up to the door, and all the people who have great names in France came to write them down in token of sympathy and regret. I glanced over the pages that night and saw every patronymic in the French armorial. It read like a manuscript copy of the Almanach de Gotha. Many of the foreign ambassadors too, and English noblemen, and some of the French Ministers had written in the book. The President himself had sent an equerry to enter the sign-manual of his grief.

Even after death it is a good thing to have been a duke and to have had a rich wife. The man was buried with pomp and on the marble of his tomb eulogies were carved.

And I thought of poor old *Grand'mère*, who had been bundled into the *fosse commune* of —— churchyard, to rest for the five years which French regulations allot to paupers as their share of Eternity.

What impressed me much in connection with this hotel tragedy was the great skill with which the management had kept so startling an occurrence secret. I could not help thinking how I should have felt if in the days of my special Paris correspondentship to a great New York daily I had discovered two days after the event that the ducal husband of one of the great American heiresses

had died under such circumstances within nine feet of me, without my knowing about it, and having in consequence failed to "file" a couple of thousand words of cable on the subject. For to the particular paper which I am thinking of, any scandal about the rich and noble was the kind of "story" that the editorial mind lusted after. "We are a democratic paper," said that editor once to me, "and what we like is to tomahawk the aristocrats." I could imagine the brief cable I should have received from New York directly after my lapse had become apparent. "Dubs not wanted. Get"—or words to that effect—would have conveyed to me that I was "fired." The excuse that I might have put forward—namely, that I had always understood that any particularly good "story" was to be kept for the Sunday paper, and that that was why I had not filed any cable on the subject until the Saturday, would certainly not have been accepted in connection with news of such paramount importance as the death from the drug habit, after a prolonged debauch, of a duke who was the husband of the daughter and heiress of one of the richest men in the States. All the less because, as a conscientious reporter knowing the needs of the readers of that particular paper, I should certainly have sent off, on the Friday morning, as soon as I had heard the startling news, a full account of how the Duchess de —— was suffering "bad" from toothache, and how she had cabled to London for the special "tooth-carpenter" whom she patronised. The cable would have afforded one of the leader-writers a fine opportunity for letting his democratic fury loose on the folly of these

bloated and effete aristocrats who would suffer the most hideous agonies for hours and days rather than allow their august jaws to be handled by some stranger not of approved skill and social pre-eminence. The editor would have told me in answer to the excuse about the Sunday paper that if I thought the story about the duchess's molar and the London dentist good enough to cable, why had I kept back the true story of the duke, the cocaine and the catastrophe.

Foreign hotelkeepers are very clever in concealing anything "unpleasant" that happens in their houses. The Riviera hosts are pre-eminent in that matter and handle a suicide with the same ease as their hall-porter a gladstone bag. Almost equal in skill of this kind was the management of a certain big hotel near Cairo, which was much frequented by invalids, many of them in advanced stages of their disease. I spent several months in the house, but I never once heard of any death. One noticed that such and such a guest was no longer to be seen, and if one inquired about him one was told that he had "gone South." One night, however, returning at half-past two in the morning, I actually met a funeral cortège in the passage leading from my room. The arrangement in that house was to remove such guests as were "going South," silently, in the dead of night, by a little private exit which opened to these guests alone.

The hotel in question was much patronised by Germans, and it was amusing to notice the strong class distinctions which were observed amongst them. People with a title refused to associate with

commoners, and even extended their haughty disdain to untitled Englishmen. On the other hand they were friendly and sociable with any foreigner who might have a prefix to his family name. I amused myself once by calculating the actual cash value of the title of baron which was borne by a young man who used to come to the hotel and who as a social equal was made much of by the German aristocrats who lived there. This youth was the great-grandson of a financier who had bought a title from one of the German princelets. It was reported that he had paid a thousand pounds for the distinction. He had left five sons, who, according to the curious arrangements which obtain on the Continent, were each entitled to their father's rank and distinction. So each of these barons enjoyed his title at an original cost of a thousand pounds divided by six. The youth's grandfather had left several sons, who all became barons in their turn, and he himself shared with seven brothers the same style and privilege. A brief calculation established the fact that the exact price paid for his title was a trifle under three pounds. In the event of his marrying and having seven sons in his turn—and the race is extraordinarily prolific—each of them would enjoy baronial honours for a trifle over eight and fivepence. A better investment could not, I think, be made.

There was much of interest to be observed in Egypt, and it has always struck me as a fact which would have afforded Dr Watts the subject of an effective homily, that the barren desert contains no less than two hundred varieties of plants and

flowers. The moral which Dr Watts might have adduced would have been that in even the most arid and wicked natures there are spots of fresh beauty, and that from the most sterile hearts flowers of virtue will spring. The fact that each one of these desert plants is more poisonous than the last might have been disregarded for the sake of the homily. An American lady staying at our hotel was very nearly killed because being on a walk in the desert she tried to quench her thirst by chewing some green stuff which she found growing there. There is no compromise about the sandy waste. It is bad all through. "It is fierce," as that American lady said. I was much impressed with the resigned attitude of the donkeys which are a feature of Cairo and its surroundings. I never saw dejection more vividly portrayed. "Well, of all the wretched arrangements!" is what they seem to express with their drooping ears, their soured look and their dismal eyes. The camels on the other hand assume the superior air of very prosperous and purse-proud people. They are always chewing something and make that movement of deglutination in their throats which one notices in rich old ladies who have funded incomes and are always struggling against the effects of that chronic biliousness which arises from overeating. These camels have a most supercilious air. I never saw one go by pursing his lips and tossing his head without thinking that I could hear him say: "If you run away with the idea that what you have read in your school books about our living and contenting ourselves with a handful of date-stones as our sole food for an indefinite

number of days, you are making one of the biggest mistakes of your life. No, sir." And the fact is that camels seem always to be eating, and heartily.

However, I believe that it is a fact that these animals can go a very long time without food or water. I remember hearing much about them from my friend Sven Hedin, the great Swedish traveller, who with a caravan crossed some terrible desert in Persia from which he alone escaped with his life. He is the man who holds the record for having gone the longest period without anything to drink. He lived eleven days thus and escaped to tell the tale. His description of his sufferings, which I listened to in his modest apartment in Stockholm, was very thrilling. He said that his blood had become as thick as red currant jelly, and that his tongue was shrivelled up at the back of his mouth like a tiny, dried mushroom.

I found much to admire in Sven Hedin, but what I particularly think about when his name is mentioned is a precaution which he takes against one of the most common annoyances of life. After my interview with him that day I lunched at his house. Before lunch he took me into his bedroom to wash my hands, and while there I noticed on his dressing-table a large china bowl filled to the very top with cheap collar-studs of every size and variety. There must have been hundreds of them.

" Yes," he said, " whenever I see a hawker in the street selling collar-studs, I always buy a handful. You know the kind of thing, ' a handful for ten

oere'" (one penny). "Then, when I come home I empty them into this bowl. In this way I am never short of a collar-stud, and if when I am putting on my collar my stud, with the way those things have, tries some funny business, and rolls away under the bed, why, I let it roll and just help myself to another from my stock. It saves time and temper, and I, I score off the stud."

I thought Sven Hedin's idea great.

During luncheon that day we talked about King Oscar. Hedin admired him very much and spoke highly of his kindness. "Whenever I return to Stockholm," he told me, "his Majesty, who has kept up a constant correspondence with me during my travels, always sends to the station to have me met, and just barely allows me time to come home and kiss my parents, after which I must go at once to the Palais."

I told Hedin that I had been particularly struck with the King's simplicity and bonhomie, and then related an unpleasant adventure I had had in Stockholm on the occasion of my visit to interview his Majesty; how the valet in the hotel where I had put up—it was a third-rate place—had walked off with my tweed suit, in the pockets of which was all my money, and how I had been left penniless, with no other clothes beyond the dress suit which I had worn at the palace. The hotel people refused all responsibility and would allow me no credit, and I found myself in a very tight place. But two days previously I had bought for twenty kroner a big Swedish-French dictionary, which was practically my sole asset. I carried this back to the bookseller's and induced him to repurchase

it at a heavy sacrifice. However, with the money which he gave me I was able to telegraph to my employers in London for a telegraphic remittance, and to subsist pending its arrival. I added that those days of penury spent in walking about Stockholm dressed in an evening suit and an ulster were amongst the least agreeable within recent years. Hedin said that I had been very foolish, that I ought to have written to King Oscar, who would certainly have come to the rescue and spared me all that unpleasantness. And I really believe that he would have done so, and that I should have been in the proud position of owing money to a monarch other than my own.

The reference to Sven Hedin, the explorer who had had adventures in the desert, reminds me of a charming if eccentric American whom I met in Egypt, Mr Dow Covington, who has spent the best years of his life in exploring the Pyramids and has, I believe, done some most excellent Egyptological work. I never saw a greater enthusiast than Mr Covington, who has sacrificed everything to his studies. For years he lived in a tent near the Great Pyramid, alone and unattended, maintaining himself solely by such writings as he could find time for, and by a variety of occupations in Cairo, when money was altogether lacking. Every moment that he could spare was spent on the Pyramids. I believe it was he who cleared the base of the Great Pyramid, and other discoveries in connection with this monument are ranked to his credit. He told me that he *loves* the Pyramids. He is rather proud of the fact that he slept one night in the sarcophagus in the King's Chamber, to the amazement of the

Arabs, who considered his courage very great. "I passed a good night there," he told me; "I didn't wear any clothes at all but wrapped myself up in the American flag. There were only four of us that night in the King's chamber—the bats, the sarcophagus, the American flag and Dow Covington." On the following night he slept in the Queen's chamber in the smaller Pyramid, but on this occasion he dressed himself in evening dress, with white kid gloves, patent leather boots and an opera hat. He lay down in this attire in the coffin in which the Queen had slept her long sleep and covered himself over with the Union Jack.

I asked Mr Covington if it were true, as I had never climbed to the summit of the Great Pyramid, that the platform at the top would, as a Frenchman remarked, "make a splendid place for a billiard-table." ("*Quel emplacement magnifique pour un billard*" were the Frenchman's exact words.) But the enthusiast would not listen to any ribaldry. He was quite annoyed when, asking me what I thought of the desert, I answered him, with literal truth, that I could see nothing in it.

The German adulation of titles, remarked upon above, contrasts strongly with the indifference of the French to nobiliary distinctions. Your average French business man is lost in astonishment at our English worship of rank. "It seems to take one back to the Middle Ages, or at anyrate to well before the French Revolution," said a Frenchman who came down to the country to see me about some work that was wanted in the house. "When

I go to some country house I am met at the station by footmen, and it's "*Sa Seigneurie* wants this," "*His Lordship* says that." And they seem to be terribly in earnest about it, and the lordship business seems such a positive factor. I can't understand it at all. It seems incredible, so entirely out of date in these days." So little importance do the authorities attach to the use of titles that anyone may endow himself in France with a patent of nobility. Every *cocotte* of any standing assumes the rank of countess or marchioness, and as long as the woman has the money to keep up her position, her rank is taken quite seriously by the public. And that one can ennoble oneself with no great difficulty with the sanction of the law was shown the other day, when Mr Wiener the dramatist obtained permission to take as his legal name and style the *nom de guerre* under which he had written for many years, and became definitely known as Monsieur Francis de Croisset. It is not regarded, by the way, in France as a suspicious circumstance for a man to call himself by another name than rightly belongs to him. The word "*alias*" in England is a stigma, and if Bill Jones comes before the police magistrate with the further qualification of *alias* So-and-So we all think that there must be something wrong in Mr Bill Jones's past. In France the fact of his calling himself by another name would not arouse any question or doubt in the minds of the magistrates. He would simply figure on the charge-sheet as "le Sieur Bill Jones *dit*"—let us say—"le Marquis de Robinson." This attitude arises as much from the indifference of the French to these

distinctions, and their refusal to attach any importance to them, as from their larger tolerance of human foibles. "If a man likes to call himself a marquis, why on earth should I prevent him," says your French police magistrate.

CHAPTER XV

My Neighbour in Black—The Consolation of a *Croquemort*—Curiosities from the Codes—Women and Banks—Women and Teacups—A Monstrous Soirée *monstre*—A Duel in Diamonds—Bohemia *en Fête*—Paderewski ignored, Melba unnoticed—The Prince's Bait—A Literary "Afternoon"—The Lecture "Stunt"—Parisian Loafers and American Heiresses—Darkey and the White Garden—Danger from the Dane—A Tailor for Dogs—His Unwelcome Customer—Pears and Louis-Philippe—Decline and Fall of the Poodle—The Dogs' Hairdresser and the Stranger—Full Service but No Fee—Old Lamps for New—*A la Lanterne!*—Monsieur Grévy and the Elysée — Monsieur Thiers and his Studies — Ingratitude towards Monsieur Thiers—Bibi insults, Themis laughs—Aurélien Scholl on the Flight of Time—"Appeal at Once"

THERE is one thing that they certainly do much better in France, and that is the expedition with which they bury their dead. Funeral follows demise within forty-eight hours, save in exceptional cases. Our English habit of keeping dead bodies in our houses sometimes for a week before burial is gruesome in the extreme. No doubt the motive which originally prompted this custom was a good and pious one, but its observance is both physically and morally unhealthy.

While French funerals are conducted with much greater decorum than is the rule in England, the undertaker is in France regarded with superstitious horror, a feeling incomprehensible to the English mind. The unfortunate undertaker's man in Paris is under taboo; he finds it difficult to get lodgings, when his trade is known; he is generically described

in Parisian argot as a *croquemort*, or devourer of corpses, and I think that the average American woman would rather marry a Chinaman or a negro than a Parisienne would consent to a matrimonial alliance with a man in this trade. In describing the abject condition of Bazouge, the undertaker's man in " L'Assommoir," Zola was drawing from life. In my very early days in Paris, when I was living in a garret in the rue de Castiglione, I had as neighbour an elderly *croquemort*. He was a man of the most despondent nature, and often poured his troubles into my ear. Nobody would speak to him in the house, the maid-servants used to touch wood for luck if they happened to meet him on the stairs. " Yet," he said, " I perform useful functions and always try to do my best so as to satisfy the honourable families." I told him that it is useless to rebel against the immanent injustices of life, and asked him to consider that there was I vegetating *au sixième*, when, according to my own estimate of my worth, I ought to be feasting on the first floor.

A cause of disquiet to this poor man was that he feared at any time to get notice to leave. " Should a tenant make a strong objection to meeting me in the house, I know that I should be turned out. I do my best to conceal myself. I rarely come home till after dark, and creep out of the house in the mornings before people are about."

I was aware of the objection to his presence, because when I came to rent my garret another sixth-floor tenant, who had overheard me discussing the matter with the concierge, told me that that part of the floor was *très mal habité* (not at all

respectably inhabited), that in fact my next-door neighbour was a *croquemort*.

I remembered this some years later, when, circumstances having again brought me down to mean habitations, I was bargaining for the weekly lease of the cottage in Catford where poor Ernest Dowson died. On this occasion I was informed that I should be expected to supply unquestionable references, inasmuch as the row of cottages was occupied by most respectable tenants. "For instance, the house next to the one you wish to take," I was informed, "is occupied by a retired postman."

I asked the *croquemort* why he should consider notice to leave his garret such a catastrophe. He said that he should find it very difficult to get in anywhere else with his things. "I should have to go to some low hotel and take a furnished room, and you see I have always lived respectably in my own furniture." And then he added: "And I am much attached to this room of mine here. When I push up the window in the roof and look out I can see the Napoleon of the Place Vendôme, and anywhere else I should miss him dreadfully."

"Yes," I said. "He has been described as the great patron of undertakers, the man who strewed Europe with corpses."

"Oh! fie! fie!" said the *croquemort*, "I did not mean that. I look on him as the greatest man that ever was. I like to feel in his company. It seems to console me for the contempt of the small fry. I say to myself: 'Never mind, to-night you will be with Napoleon once more.'"

Funerals in France have always to be paid for in

advance, and no doubt this precaution is taken by the monopoly-holding company because it would not rank amongst the privileged creditors of the deceased's estate. The rule there is that the very first bill to be paid is the baker's; even doctor and chemist come afterwards. The theory is that bread being indispensable to life it is just that it should be paid for before anything else, even medicine.

The French have always had a suspicion of chemists and their bills. "That is an apothecary's bill" is a remark which is often made when any exorbitant account is rendered. Before the Revolution it was legal for the executors to reduce the bill of the chemist who had supplied the deceased with his potions and pills by seventy-five per cent.

There are many curious laws and customs in France, and I have often thought that novelists and writers of tales might study the Code Napoleon to advantage. Thus a man may be sentenced to death and executed for a mere attempt at murder. He is liable also to death for setting fire to an inhabited house. Both these dispensations might be made use of in a novel. One sometimes has to get rid of the villain by the gallows (or guillotine) but cannot very readily spare one of the other characters to play the part of his victim. Then again no child can be prosecuted for robbing his parents or grandparents, and there again one might find material for an effective incident. Few books could be made better use of by a cosmopolitan novelist than the French codes.

Women may not in France have banking-accounts, nor draw cheques, nor may foreign

married women residing there, unless they are so entitled in their native land.

I was waiting the other day in the Crédit Lyonnais at Cannes to be attended to, and had been watching a smart young American woman, who was going to motor over to Monte Carlo, drawing out a very large sum of money for the day's needs at the gambling-table—something like two thousand dollars—when I heard a gentleman, who was accompanied by a lady, tell the manager that he wished to open an account for his wife at their bank. He added that he thought of depositing six hundred francs in her name (twenty-four pounds) " for her pocket-money during our stay on the Riviera." The manager said that he must first be assured that in Switzerland, where these people came from, it was legal for married women to have private accounts.

A curious survival of the servitude of women may be observed in any French drawing-room at five-o'clock tea, or when after-dinner coffee is served. It is the women, usually the younger ones, who carry round the cups and do the waiting. I remember when I first went to Paris being at a reception. Tea having been brought in, I got up and wanted to assist the ladies in handing round the cups and the dishes. " *Vous êtes donc jeune fille*, Sherard," said Daudet, laughing, as I handed him a plate of muffins, and then I saw that I had been doing a thing that was not done. Of course in England it is the men who do the waiting. I was reminded of this rather sharply once just after my return from Paris, when at the house of an American lady, tea having come in, I did not as-

sume the functions of waiter. I had simply got into the habit of allowing the women to wait on these occasions. A French girl who was there was beginning to hand round the cups when our hostess bade her sit down. "A woman should never do anything when there is a man there to do it for her" was the lady's remark, and once again I was made to feel small.

This reference to a reception at the house of an American lady reminds me of an extraordinary social function to which I was once bidden at the Hotel Continental in Paris. The immensely wealthy widow of an American manufacturer of quack medicines—she was reported, without exaggeration, I believe, to have an income of three hundred and twenty thousand pounds a year—was desirous of capturing Parisian society at one *coup*. It was said that she intended to settle down in Paris and contract a titled alliance. She accordingly arranged for a monster reception. A well-known American newspaper woman and lecturer was the organiser of the fête. The whole first-floor of the Hotel Continental was secured for the soirée, Paderewski and Melba, amongst other artists, were engaged to entertain the guests, and unlimited orders for supper and refreshments were placed with the hotel management. The next thing to be done was to get people to come. A wholesale distribution of invitation-cards was made. Handfuls were given to everybody who was known to the organiser of the fête; cards were sent by post to the whole of Tout-Paris, and on a monster scale the farce of "*Monsieur Champfleury restera chez lui*" was enacted over again. Cards were

pushed into one's hand on unexpected occasions, and though I never saw them being distributed, like prospectuses on the boulevards, it was currently reported that this was done.

The success of the soirée, at least in respect of the multitude of guests who responded to these promiscuous invitations, was due, we understood, less to the insatiable curiosity of the Parisian *badaud*, who is to be found in every rank of society in that metropolis, than to the fact that it was made known that on this occasion a final battle for supremacy was to be fought between two American millionairesses, whose special rivalry had for months been the talk of Paris. The point at issue between these two ladies was which of them possessed the largest quantity and finest quality of diamonds. It was understood that at the soirée in question each lady was going to appear with every gem in her possession glittering on her body. So interesting, so lofty a contest could not but excite interest, and, as I have indicated, the halls of the first floor of the Continental were crowded.

The crush was very great ; the company present was most mixed. Nobody seemed to know anybody else. People walked about, or rather struggled round, like at a fair. The aged hostess, who, plastered over with paint and iridescent with jewels, was standing by the entrance to receive her guests, was unceremoniously passed by, or even elbowed out of the way as each new-comer hurried in, determined on reaching the buffet while champagne was still in abundance. As I strolled round the outskirts of the seething mass which had taken the refreshment stalls by storm

I recognised every type of Parisian Bohemia. The man whom I descried pocketing cigars by the handful was a decadent poet from Montmartre, the young lady whom I saw behind an azalea bush with a champagne bottle tilted to her mouth was a person not usually met in polite society. There were thieves there also—two notorious pickpockets at least I distinctly recognised. Every society reporter, male and female, in Paris was present, and all the foreign correspondents, except of course the mighty Blowitz. Here and there I noticed people on the fringe of Parisian society. Some good people were there also, I know, because next day the papers, in their accounts of this *grande soirée mondaine*, gave long lists of social celebrities who were present. I did not see the diamond contest. It appears that the detectives had strongly recommended the two ladies to tarry, bejewelled as they were, not a moment longer than they could help in so mixed an assembly, and they had both departed before I came on the scene. I was informed, however, that one of the ladies had appeared wearing a bodice which seemed to be entirely made of diamonds.

At one time in the course of the evening I was standing wedged in a crowd, when a terrific noise behind me, like the bursting of a bomb, caused me to spring almost into the air. Turning round to see what had happened I found that just at the back of us was a low platform on which at a grand piano was seated Ignace Paderewski. He seemed in a very angry state of mind, his hair was bristling on his head, and just as I looked round he jumped up from his stool, shut down the piano with a crash,

and hurried away. The terrific noise which I had heard was that now familiar and tremendous bang with which this great artist expresses his displeasure with an inattentive audience. I heard afterwards that he considered that he had been grossly insulted that night. Not a soul had listened to his music—indeed the clamour was so great in the room it could not be heard at all—nobody seemed to have taken any notice of him. People had walked and talked and stood in serried ranks with their backs to him while he had been playing.

A little while later I saw Melba on the same stage, singing her sweetest amidst similar indifference. As she descended from the platform I expressed my regret to her that so divine an artist should have been exposed to such treatment, but she only laughed and said she did not mind at all, though, of course, she would have preferred being listened to. Her bonhomie and the business common-sense which she showed were in strong contrast to the irritability and wounded vanity of Paderewski.

I do not know what result in social advancement that curious soirée brought with it to the quack doctor's widow, but some time later I heard that not less than three princes—one Italian, one Russian and one nondescript—were in the lists as suitors for her hand. But prudence prevailed over her ambition and she remained unmarried till her death. She used to be spoken about as "the enamelled lady," and it was reported that she had had her face made beautiful for ever by some successor to our own Madame Rachel.

There are always a number of marriageable princes of more or less authenticity hanging about the Parisian *salons* or the fashionable summer and winter resorts. A few years ago in Cannes my attention was drawn on the Promenade des Anglais to a well-dressed, fatuous-looking man, who was attitudinising outside the Cercle Maritime. He looked to me like an artist's model posturing for the legs, which in his case were certainly shapely. I was told he was a Russian prince. It appeared that he hoped in this way to attract the favourable notice of some rich widow or heiress and to be encouraged to make her acquaintance. I suppose the man knew the people he had to deal with well, and understood the best bait with which to set his matrimonial trap.

Some time after the reception at the Continental I went to an "afternoon" given at her apartment in the Champs-Elysées by the literary lady who had organised that festivity. On arriving at the house I was shown into the drawing-room and conducted to a seat in the front row of a large number of chairs which filled the room, and which were set out as for some entertainment. "Entertainment" is hardly the word for the programme which had been provided. The "afternoon" consisted of listening to an interminable lecture delivered by the hostess. I was so placed that it was impossible for me to get away until the very last word had been spoken. I do not think that I ever spent two more tedious hours, and my resentment was all the greater because I felt that I had been trapped into this rôle of unwilling listener. The same feeling seemed to actuate

many of my unfortunate companions in the audience. Yet nobody had the courage to rise and leave the room. The lecture itself was a mere recital of insignificant conversations between the lady of the house and various "dear" princesses and other ladies of title. "And then the dear Princess Beatrice said . . ." "And it was here that I first was introduced to the dear Duchess of ——" And so it went on and on and on. I realised at last the feelings of those people in Murger's "Vie de Bohème" when the hospitable stranger, having inveigled them into his apartment, produces, with the intention of reading it to them, the ponderous manuscript of his latest literary effort.

"Why on earth," I asked of a New York colleague to whom I related this experience, "didn't Mrs S—— mention on her invitation-cards that there was to be a lecture? So, I could have stopped away."

"Mrs S——," answered my friend, laughing at my discomfiture, "knows a trick worth two of that. The good woman has a mania for telling people about her aristocratic connections, and can't get anybody to listen to her. So she has started this lecture stunt and gives you all the pomps and glories of her career *en bloc*. But if she let people know she was going to lecture to them, it would be 'outside for theirs.'"

It is in these circles—that is to say, amongst the American residents—that one meets the most objectionable type of young Parisian. This is the young man who tries to adopt English customs, dress and words. These are the youths who speak about "*le footing*," "*le tub*," "*le smart*,"

when referring to walking-exercise, to the morning's bath, and to what is elegant and refined. Their enthusiasm about "le tub" suggests a previous unfamiliarity with the morning ablution, and in other ways they also discredit themselves. At one time it appeared to these people that the smart thing to do at a *café* or bar was to order "un soda," forgetting that a soda without a "stick" in it is the least stimulating of beverages. But until they learned that what the Englishman and American drink is soda with something mixed with it, they devotedly used to sit round drinking plain seltzers and pretending to enjoy them. The object of these youths in dangling round in Parisian-American drawing-rooms is to secure a rich American wife. But the young heiresses seem to appreciate the fellows at their right value. "They are just the cutest things in creation," said a girl to me, speaking of her suite of French admirers, "but to marry one of them. Oh, my!"

A characteristic of the American girl is a contempt for the loafer, and the worst loafer in the world is the kind of young Frenchman referred to. He has not even that taste for sport of some kind which is often a redeeming feature in his English congener.

It was strongly impressed upon me how American youths work when a winter or two ago the proprietor of a hotel in Port Antonio, Jamaica, speaking about the laziness of the Jamaican negroes whom he had been employing in his summer-resort hotel in Massachusetts, remarked to me: "When I get back to Swampscote this summer I shall fire every negro in the outfit and get in students in their place."

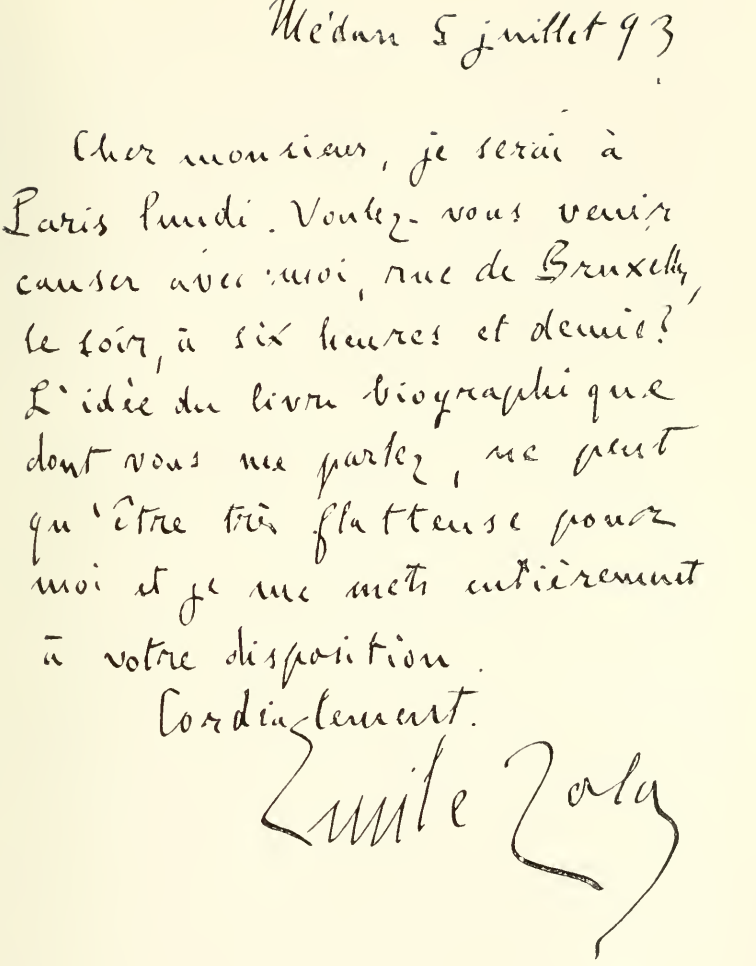
One had heard that American students take menial situations in hotels during vacation so as to earn the money for their maintenance and classes in term, but I had no idea that this had become a regular system and a feature of the American labour market.

The American does not believe that he has any prescriptive right to live or to be fed. On this side of the Atlantic many people are of the contrary opinion. There are some who fancy that the world was made for them.

In a beautiful country house in which I once lived there was a large "white garden" where every flower was white. Under the moonlight this garden was the most beautiful thing in the world.

There was an Aberdeen terrier there, belonging to the mistress of the house, and I noticed that it had a special fondness for this white garden. It was its favourite exercise ground. I often wondered whether the little black dog did not realise that his white surroundings set him off to best advantage, and whether he did not imagine that the garden had been laid out and planted with no other purpose in view. It would have been very human of him if he did.

This dog's companion was a great Dane, and one day out in the village I saw a little girl standing close to the big hound. Suddenly the child's elder sister called out, "Come away, Liza. It'll kick you." That village was in the centre of the Pytchley district, where little else but horses and things equine are talked or thought about. Children are constantly being warned of the danger there is


Médan 5 juillet 93

Cher monsieur, je serai à Paris lundi. Voulez-vous venir causer avec moi, rue de Bruxelles, le soir, à six heures et demie? L'idée du livre biographique dont vous me parlez, me paraît bien flatteuse pour moi et je me mets entièrement à votre disposition.

Cordialement.

Emile Zola

First letter from Emile Zola to Mr. Sherard, accepting the suggestion that Mr. Sherard should write his biography.

in going too near a horse and see the same danger in any quadruped.

The absurd trade of tailoring for dogs was started in the Palais Royal in Paris. One could almost understand the fury of the Anarchists after a chat with the tailor and listening to his description of the most fashionable socks, ties and pocket-handkerchiefs for pet dogs. I remember asking him if some of the ladies did not scent these lace-trimmed *mouchoirs,* and he said that certainly they did. I suggested that Ess. de Filth, or Dirt Bouquet would be the most suitable extracts, but it appeared that Lily of the Valley was what was most asked for. While we were talking together a poor, half-starved mongrel ran into the shop. "Here's a gentleman," I said, "who has come for a warm overcoat. He looks as if he needed one." The tailor *pour chiens* lunged out with his foot at the intruder. "Outside, *canaille,*" he cried. "Do you take me for a fool?"

The literal translation of what he said was: "Do you take me for a pear?" *Poire* is the French equivalent for "mug," and just as the word "mug" originally meant a man's head and face, so also did the French word "*poire.*" This was derived from the fact that the conformation of King Louis-Philippe's head much resembled a pear in outline. It was very broad at the base and the top of his skull narrowed to a point. *Poire* in slang now means fool, guy, mug, and is a very common expression in Paris, an expression of contempt.

The poodle, so essentially a French dog, although its origin is Teutonic, and its name is derived from the German word "*Puddlen,*" has, so the tailor told

me, gone very much out of fashion. The poodle has had its day and has been relegated once more to that lowly social position which it held in its native land in the days when "Minna von Barnhelm" was written. This must have brought considerable loss on those industrials who used to exercise their trade as hairdressers to these dogs on the quays near the Pont-Neuf. Many of these men were true artists and could made a poodle look as foppish and ridiculous as one could imagine.

It was related of one of these men that one day, seeing a man lounging on the quay with a very shaggy poodle close to him, he offered the stranger his services to beautify the dog.

"That dog would look ever so much better," he said, "if you allowed me to pass the scissors over him."

"I have no objection, I am sure," said the man.

The *tondeur pour chiens* immediately seized on the dog and began his operations.

"Don't you think he would look very well if I left a star on each thigh?"

"A capital idea. He would look very well indeed."

"A pompon on the head?" suggested the *tondeur*, plying the shears. "And anklets on each leg? Bracelets too, perhaps?"

"Splendid."

"And of course you would like the fashionable lion's tail for him," continued the artist when he had finished the rest.

"The lion's tail would improve his appearance immensely."

"There now," said the *tondeur*, when he had given

the final touches to the dog's coat. "Look what a beauty I have made of him! I am sure that the missus will not recognise him when he gets home."

"Excellent! Splendid! You have made a very good job indeed of it," said the stranger, walking away.

"Ah, a minute. Stop, *monsieur*," cried the *tondeur*, extending his hand and rubbing his thumb and forefinger together. "You have forgotten something. My little fee. For the full coiffure my charge is twelve francs, and I am giving you the lion's tail into the bargain."

"I don't know what you mean," said the man, still moving away.

"But *sacré-bleu*! Haven't I spent an hour over your dog."

"It isn't my dog. I have not even the honour of its acquaintance. I don't like dogs. I know nothing about it."

Apropos of the quays in Paris there was to be noticed in the lighting of those on the left bank of the Seine, until quite recently, a proof of the ineradicable conservatism of Republican France. The lamps used there were the old oil lanterns which used to be hauled up to the top of the lamp-post by means of a cord and a pulley, the identical lamps which were employed in Paris before the Revolution and which were found so useful by the *sans-culottes* for stringing up aristocrats *à la lanterne*.

My attention was originally drawn to this fact in a conversation that I once had in the Grand Café with Monsieur Grévy, who used to go there in pre-Presidential years to play chess. He was

genial enough in those days and fond of a "crack." My favourite table adjoined the one at which he used to sit, and it was in this way that I got into conversation with him. I noticed that he was a bad loser—that is to say that he hated being defeated. I suppose that the real reason of this was that he disliked having to pay for the rent of the chess-board, which was the stake for which he always played. Great penuriousness was the old gentleman's leading trait. It was almost pathetically manifested in his extreme reluctance to leave the Elysée after the Wilson scandals. He simply clung to the place and kept deferring his departure, first day by day, and then hour by hour, on various pretexts. It is said that at the very last, just as everybody thought he was about to drive off, he professed suddenly to remember that he had left a favourite umbrella behind the door in his bedroom and went back to look for it—just to prolong by a few minutes his sojourn in the house where he had lived so comfortably and where he had been able so considerably to increase his private fortune.

Monsieur Thiers took his enforced departure from the same Elysian abode with much greater philosophy and resignation. On that occasion he made a remark which has frequently been quoted and which has much amused the Parisians. "Ah, at last," he said, "I shall be able to return to my dear studies."

I have always thought that the French proved themselves singularly ungrateful to Thiers, who, whatever his defects may have been, showed great patriotism during France's great distress. Yet one never hears him spoken well of, or indeed

14 Place Vendome

Le 20 Janvier

Mon cher Maître,

C'est un collier de perles que vous avez reçu de moi ce matin! Je vous en remercie toute émue. Et reste un peu folle admirative & charmée toutes des fois que je vous relis —

Si ce n'était la pensée de ce pauvre grand Wilde qui rit en français dans notre adaptation je serais confuse d'avoir demandé l'assistance de votre puissant talent, mais il fallait une préface digne de la Ballade de la Geole, & la voilà je préface & l'annonce admirablement

L'hommage étant plus grand de venir de plus haut, permettez au simple poète Jean Olivier de vous adresser l'expression de toute sa gratitude, il vous aimait en Oscar Wilde il aimera maintenant Oscar Wilde en vous. —

Luce Jean Olivier

Vous signalez un nouveau livre de vous, est il en Anglais? & sans quel titre?

Letter from Madame Luce-Jean Olivier acknowledging Robert Sherard's preface in French to her translation of the "Ballad of Reading Gaol."

without a certain tinge of contempt. I suppose that the French, like all other men, judge by results. Thiers, though not by his fault, did *not* deliver the goods. He started out on his negotiations with the Prussians with the declaration that he would not consent to the surrender of one inch of French territory, and the discussion eventually ended as history records. So the French seem to enjoy calling him "Pas un Pouce" (not an inch), and none of the other nicknames by which he was known, and is sometimes still spoken of, is other than derisive. I was much struck one day in the Eighth Chamber of Correctional Police, when Bibi-la-Purée was charged with insulting the police, to see the magistrates laugh at a term he used about Monsieur Thiers. I fully expected to hear him severely rebuked for speaking disrespectfully of a great Frenchman who had the further claim to deference which death confers. Bibi-la-Purée had been found asleep in a wheelbarrow outside the house on the Place St Georges, which was formerly occupied by the first President of the Third Republic, and on being aroused had insulted the police for disturbing his slumbers. He had then refused to budge, and had finally been wheeled off to the lock-up by the *sergeants-de-ville*. His defence was that one slept as best one could. "The police," he added, "could not expect me to go and ask for a lodging at the house of *le petit Foutriquet*." It was this designation of Monsieur Thiers which made the court laugh. It was ugly and insulting, yet it is the nickname by which the President is usually spoken about on the rare occasions on which he is referred to. I presume

that Napoleon having been known as Badinguet, a somewhat similar name was coined for his successor.

The way in which Thiers has been forgotten and his services disremembered shows how very true is that French saying : " The dead die quick."

I remember once quoting this saying to Aurélien Scholl, who immediately retorted : " I don't mind about that. Let the dead die as quickly as they like. What uncurls *my* hair " (a Parisianism for " what upsets *me* ") " is the terrific rapidity with which the living live, with which life slips away. Men say that after forty time passes twice as fast as before, but, *mon Dieu*, let them wait till they reach sixty and they will find that every year passes as quickly as a month did in earlier days."

" Oh, by the way," he added, as I remember, breaking off to tell his latest anecdote. " Have you heard what Banker Levy telegraphed to his counsel the other day when the barrister had wired him that he had won a case he had before the courts, using the figurative expression, ' Justice and Right have triumphed ' ? Monsieur Levy immediately telegraphed back : '*Allez en appel*" ' (Appeal at once).

CHAPTER XVI

Aurélien Scholl and the Jews—With Scholl in London—Servants in England and France—His Lordship's Butler—A Tyburn *Oubliette—Sus per coll.*—"The Landlord 'twas, who——"—Curious Coincidences—On Ellis Island—The Spinning Lady, by Romney—A Portrait of Miss Love—One's Knowledge of French—Vague Perfume, or Musty Odour—Field-mice or Bell-towers—A Temperance Dickens—Sam Weller and the Modern Valet—Proletariat and Menials—The Parisian Charwoman—An Elderly Othello—"*C'est le Visky*"—At the Charité Hospital—Hypnotic Extravagancies—Doctor Luys and his Theories—The *N*-rays revived—A Journalistic Axiom—Paris always New

AURÉLIEN SCHOLL was always joking about the Jews. But he was far too clever a man to be Anti-Semite. In fact I do not remember in Paris anyone who had more reason to be grateful to the race for assistance and appreciation. He once said to me that the worst Anti-Semites in Paris are the rich Jews themselves, and it is a matter of history that during the Dreyfus affair the strongest supporters of the military-clerical party were co-religionaries of the unfortunate captain. "That man has done more harm than any person in the world to our race" was a pronouncement made in my presence by one of the most prominent Israelites in Paris. Dreyfus's backers were the poor Jews all over the world. I remember, as we were being rowed back to our Lazaretto on Ellis Island in New York harbour, a conversation I had with some poor Jewish immigrants from Hertza, who like myself were being excluded from the United States of

America as undesirables, and who told me of the sacrifices they had made to contribute to the "foreign millions" of the Syndicate of which Monsieur de Freycinet—"the little white mouse" —spoke to his eternal confusion. "Poor Dreyfus," said the woman, "has come out all right. The God of Israel will protect us also."

Paris has not seemed the same to me since Scholl died. I find myself remembering him here and there. In London also I often think of him. When he came over with Zola to the Conference of the Institute of Journalists I had a long walk with him—as elsewhere related—and whenever I am in the Strand and Fleet Street it recurs to me.

We sat together in the Gaiety bar and he said to me that London seemed to him an ideal place to come over to from Paris with a morganatic wife. From that we passed on to the rights of husbands, and he said very emphatically that when a wife is tired of a man the man's rights *ipso facto* cease, and he ought readily to consent to her resumption of her liberty.

He added that Alexandre Dumas *fils's "Tue-la"* as the conclusion of "L'Affaire Clémenceau" was one of the most abominable pronouncements in literature.

Scholl was much impressed with English servants, and he remarked on the fact that we treat domestics so much better here than in Paris. He referred to the horrible garrets in which French servants are lodged in Paris and to the superior accommodation provided here. I remembered this conversation many years later when a year or two ago I was visiting, with a view to a house in town, the mansion

Original and unpublished portrait of the great poet, Oscar Wilde, friend and companion of Mr. Robert Sherard. (*See page 270.*)

of a nobleman of strange reputation, which stands not very far from the spot where Tyburn Tree once reared its sinister head. I do not think that anywhere in the world could servants' quarters more abominable be found, and I said to the lady who accompanied me: "I wish Scholl could be with us." The master's apartments were Oriental in their luxury, the domestics were expected to live in absolute darkness. The room which was pointed out to us as the apartment used by "his lordship's butler" was a tank, with a small skylight for illumination and air, a place in which one would not readily keep a porker. I cannot say that I felt much sympathy with "his lordship's butler," for what he must have undergone in his Tyburn *oubliette,* because I had formed my own opinion of the "well-trained English servant" and cannot profess for this specimen of humanity either regard or esteem. Domestic servitude seems to have eliminated from his nature every feature that embellishes character. He is profoundly resentful; gratitude is alien from his heart; kindness and consideration he considers as confessions of weakness.

I was struck with the coincidence, as I looked through the ballroom windows towards the spot where Tyburn gallows used to be, that here was the second house which I had visited as a possible tenant in which unadvertised advantage lay in the fact that the means of happy despatch were in closest proximity. I fancied myself back in the days of Doctor Dodd . . . and I remembered that when I brought poor Ernest Dowson to that cottage in Catford where the rent was weekly about what

in this palace was asked for one hour's tenancy we noticed in a field which was outside the parlour window a branching tree which seemed excellently adapted to the purposes of any man, tired of life who, with a rope . . .

I had told Scholl about a village incident which was connected with *sus per coll.* and which had interested him immensely. Some years ago I was down in a hamlet in Essex and heard that there was a man living there who had inherited a certain sum of money which he was spending rapidly in alcoholic debauches at the country public-house. He had announced to all that as soon as his money—it was originally about fifteen hundred pounds—had all been spent in beer and whisky, he should proceed to hang himself. In the fine forestry in that district he had selected the particular tree and the particular branch of it from which he should seek surcease from impecuniosity. The village believed his statement and took the keenest interest in the progress of things. People used to watch the tree as they went to their work in the morning in the hope of descrying there the accursed fruit. The steady decrease of the man's funds was common knowledge. "He can't last much longer. Landlord at the Pig and Whistle spoke a bit sharply to him yestere'en," was a remark one heard.

"Let us abbreviate," said Scholl. "Did the man eventually hang himself?"

"No," I said. "It was the landlord who committed suicide. The man married his widow and took over the Pig and Whistle."

Coincidence is a curious factor in life. I remember contributing to a series of letters in *The*

THALIA.
(Miss Love.)

Daily Graphic an article on strange samenesses of occurrence which had to be numbered amongst the events of my existence.

When I was lying on the floor of my prison in Ellis Island a man named Guiseppe d'Alessandro, a foreign sailor whom I afterwards befriended, informed me that he had come to New York on a vessel from Rio which, he said, "had a most extraordinary name." He had written it down and showed it to me. The name was "Wordsworth."

Scholl once asked me in Paris if I could give him a clue to the identity of an Englishwoman, an actress probably, of whom he had a portrait. Scholl was a great admirer of feminine beauty and he had purchased this engraving for sheer delight in the charm of the picture. From his description of the work I fancied it might be a Romney, and I told him that if that were so nobody better than myself could put a name on the original, inasmuch as my mother's people had been the "patrons" of Romney and had owned most of his best-known works. For instance the "Spinning-wheel" lady used to hang in Workington Hall, and was the embellishment of the early days of my mother and uncles. This picture was bought from Romney for six hundred pounds, which at that time was considered "big money," by Mr Curwen. His heir afterwards sold it for eight hundred pounds and congratulated himself on his profit. Later on I believe it fetched fifteen thousand pounds.

I went back with Scholl to the Savoy Hotel and saw his engraving. It was a fancy picture with the title of "Thalia."

"Master," I said, "that is the portrait of my grandmother."

"*Farceur*," said Scholl.

But it was quite true. It was the portrait of Miss Love, who was reputed the most beautiful woman in England in the first quarter of the nineteenth century.

"Well," said Scholl, screwing his eyeglass into its place, and taking a long look. "That is only another proof that Zola's . . ."

"Principle of heredity is . . . not . . . always . . ."

"*Parbleu*," said Aurélien Scholl.

Scholl, who, while he was always chaffing the Jews about their instinct for acquiring wealth, was himself of no inconsiderable appetite for money, and who ended his days as the principal proprietor of a gambling hell in the rue de Taitbout, had, although of German extraction, a splendid knowledge of the French tongue. Indeed the greatest masters in French philology are, as I have always found, men whose names indicate a German, not to say a Semitic, origin. There was no better writer of French than Monsieur Albert Wolff, although Monsieur Rosenthal ran him very close. It was a delight to hear Aurélien Scholl speak French, it was always a delight to read him. And it requires a great familiarity with the French language to understand how difficult it is and what is implied by a mastery of this tongue. I lived nearly a quarter of the century in Paris, speaking and writing French all the time and enjoying the companionship of the best talkers in the metropolis, yet I admit that my knowledge of the language often betrays me. A little while ago I wrote a *billet*

to a French lady, and wishing to say something to please I had put on paper that her visit had brought with it "*un relent de printemps parisien.*" What I wanted to say was that she had brought with her a vague perfume of a Parisian spring. Before sending the note off, however, I had misgivings, and looked up "*relent*" in a dictionary and discovered that it did not mean "vague perfume" but "a musty, stale odour, stink, stench or fetor," which would hardly have conveyed a compliment. Again a few days ago I was asked to write a preface to a translation of the "Ballad of Reading Gaol" which is to be published in Paris for the two ladies, Madame Luce-Jean Olivier and Madame Leonard-Marshall, who have produced this version. In the course of my article I had occasion to speak of the delight of reading a poem translated into a foreign tongue, finding once more its familiar beauties. I referred to the "plaisir du Goethe retrouvant dans le *Faust* embelli de Gerard de Nerval, etc.," and spoke of the joy a man has to hear familiar chimes of his parish church ringing out at "*des lointaines campagnoles.*" After I had written that last sonorous and effective word I looked it up in Larousse and discovered that *campagnoles* means "field-mice," which was not at all what I had wanted to convey. The right word was *campaniles.*

One of the delights of life in Paris is the Atticism of the people one meets. They know the value, they appreciate the harmony of words. Even amongst plebeians there is a veritable cultus for the *mot juste.* One could reconcile oneself to deafness in Bayswater or Berlin; it would be a cruel privation in Paris.

A few months ago I was returning to London from Paris by the Dieppe route and found myself in a carriage with some young Frenchmen who had come over to play football at the Crystal Palace. As we passed Purley one of these men said, speaking to his companions: "Here is one of the tentacular towns of London." He made haste to add, "that splendid expression, '*villes tentaculaires*,' referring to the suburbs of a great city, is borrowed from a Belgian poet." Can one imagine an average young English footballer showing such philological aptitude, or indeed saying anything else than "When we get to East Croydon we ought to have time for a glass of beer"?

Scholl, like Rostand, was an enormous admirer of Charles Dickens, and I remember an amusing conversation I had with him on the intemperate habits of all the characters in Dickens. I said: "Nowadays I believe it would pay a publisher to issue a 'Temperance Dickens.' He might make Pickwick overcome with So-and-So's cocoa and in bilious prostration when he is taken to the pound, while Mr Stiggins would be presented as having an inordinate fondness for ginger ale.

"Apropos," said Scholl, "the other night somebody asked me to drink a bottle of some extraordinary fluid called 'shincher peer.' *Quelle infection!* What can it be made of? To me it tasted like soap-water" (*eau de savon*).

We reverted back to the well-trained English servant and I asked him what he thought of Sam Weller, because, if I had to choose between the modern valet, with his silence, servility and the faithful Sam, with his horrible chatter and impudence . . .

Scholl said that in France men encourage their servants to talk to them, and that Sam would probably have been popular as a valet in Paris. Which reminded me of something Whiteing once told me when I called on him at his apartment in the rue St Honoré. "The awful thing about French servants," he said, "is the way they will profess interest in one's doings. Now when I am going out, my man keeps up a running comment on my simplest actions. 'Monsieur Vitengue is going out,' 'Monsieur Vitengue takes his umbrella,' 'Monsieur Richard fancies it is going to rain.' In England we do not want or expect a servant to say anything beyond 'Thank you' after an order has been given, and we should resent any attempt at conversation." I remember how I used to object to this perpetual "Thank you" when I returned to England still full of the French notion of the dignity of man, no matter what his position. To give a man some unpleasant thing to do, and to hear him thank you for the order always impressed me disagreeably and made me feel an accomplice in human self-abasement. And self-abasement will, I suppose, always be inseparable from menial service. The French proletariat has no respect for *les gens de maison*, less even than the English working classes. The word "*larbin*" (which is French slang for "footman") is a term of contempt. Your French navvy despises a waiter. I remember once hearing outside the Café Vachette an altercation between a *terrassier* and the waiters on the terrace. "I am a man," said he of the blouse, "and earn wages. I don't have to accept alms as a means of getting a living."

By "accepting alms" he meant of course that waiters depend on tips for their wages. He might have addressed the same sneer to the footmen and butlers in the most aristocratic French houses. Here the system of tipping exceeds even that which obtains in England, great as the nuisance there is. For instance it is not usual in London to give the butler or footman at a house where one has been dining any fee on departing. In Paris a *pourboire* is as much expected as it is in Warsaw, only the Parisian servant does not kiss your hand like his Polish colleague, but usually cuts a grimace at the smallness of the vail.

The *terrassier* referred to above, in refusing to call a menial a man, was only repeating the famous remark of a certain French marquise who on being asked by one of her friends how she could allow a man to enter her bedroom—referring to the fact that she had seen one of the marquise's footmen bringing in her *petit déjeuner*, replied: "Why, surely, you don't call *that* a man?"

It is a curious fact that the popular contempt in Paris for *les gens de maison* does not extend to those most humble of menial servants, the *femmes de ménage* or charwomen. I suppose the reason for that is that the Parisian charwoman is a woman of the people, while the better-class servants belong to a caste distinct from the plebs. It fell to my lot in my earlier days in Paris often to avail myself of the services of these excellent females, who at rates varying from twopence halfpenny to fivepence per hour will do your cooking, scrub your floor, make your bed and run your errands. I found them, except in one instance, invariably

honest, and greatly superior in other respects also to the Mrs Kidgerbury of London. One drawback, however, was that in the French *femme de ménage*, as with the rest of her sex in that delightful country, the woman never lays down her arms. I was often disappointed when, having interviewed some clean, pleasant-looking, middle-aged person, who, I thought, would suit me very well, to hear her refuse the situation. "Ah, Monsieur is a bachelor? In that case nothing can be done. I don't work at bachelors' houses."

"But, madame," I would say, "supposing I were a *curé*. Surely you have passed the canonical age?"

"Ah, but then Monsieur is not a *curé*."

And very often, for the mere gratification of pretending to believe herself young and attractive enough to be compromised by coming to a bachelor's rooms, the good woman would decline the emoluments and perquisites of the place.

In France a priest is allowed a female servant, provided her age be forty or above. This is called the "canonical age." It was related of one priest that he thought to satisfy the Episcopal prescription by employing two servants, each twenty years of age, in his household, and that he got into trouble with the bishop for so doing.

I remember once that having engaged a hideous old *femme de ménage*, who must have been nearer sixty than fifty, I noticed next morning in the garden outside my house, standing as if on sentry-duty, with his eyes glued on to my window, an old man of a most disagreeable cast of features.

"Who then," I asked of the charwoman, "is

that worthy grey-beard whom I behold standing like a leek in the centre of my lawn ? "

To stand fixedly in one place is in the French vernacular called *poireauter*, or *faire le poireau* (from the word *poireau*, leek).

" That, sir," said the woman with great dignity, " is *Monsieur mon mari*."

" Oh, indeed, and what may be the object of . . . ? "

" My husband is as jealous as a tiger," she replied, " and I, being *jeune encore*" (still young), " Monsieur, on the other hand, *garçon*, he would not consent to my coming to work here unless he accompanied me, so as to keep me under supervision."

" What a Turk ! " I cried.

For several days *Monsieur le mari* in question continued his vigil, which, amusing as it had appeared at first, became rather nerve-trying when prolonged. I was making up my mind to look out for another *femme de ménage* of less attractive appearance in her husband's estimation, or a widow possibly, when Bacchus came to my aid, and as, alas, he often does, triumphed over the claims of Venus.

That morning a loud knocking had come at my door. The charwoman had not yet arrived, and I was perforce obliged to spring from my bed, rush out into the ante-chamber and demand in no amiable tones who was there.

" Open," said the voice, " it is for Monsieur."

" But I want to know what it is. I can't open. I am *en déshabillé*."

" Open," repeated the voice. " *C'est le visky*" (It is the whisky).

"*Le visky?* The whisky? What visky? I have ordered no visky. I desire no visky."

"Open. It is the visky for Monsieur."

When I had opened the door at last I found myself confronted by a porter from one of the big wine-stores in Paris. He had come to deliver a case of twelve bottles of a special brand of Scotch whisky which since those days has become very famous indeed. Accompanying the case was a note from the Parisian agent of that firm of distillers asking me to sample the accompanying spirit, which could be obtained at certain places mentioned in Paris. "This may induce you to modify the statement you made the other day that you have not yet been able to discover a drinkable Scotch whisky in any Parisian establishment."

I then remembered having mentioned this fact in one of my signed newspaper articles. The letter had attracted the attention of the distillers in question, and their Paris agent had been instructed to send me the case of a dozen bottles—no doubt with a view to getting a good advertisement for the brand in my next article from Paris.

"Does your husband drink?" I asked of my *femme de ménage* that morning.

"Oh, monsieur, *comme un trou*" (like a hole). "That is to say he is fond of his *petit verre* like any other man," she added, correcting herself.

"Well then, give him one of these bottles," I said. "It is a Scotch liqueur, very good for the digestion."

I had, I declare, no Machiavellic intentions in this act of largess. I simply wanted to get rid of one of the twelve cumbersome bottles.

The next day there was no old gentleman to be seen in my garden, and when I asked his wife about him she said: "Oh, monsieur, it is that visky Ecossais. He found it so delicious, that he finished the bottle before he went to sleep. This morning he has pain in his hair" (*mal aux cheveux*, headache, hot coppers, etc.), "and so he has stayed in bed."

I did not see him again, and after a while his good lady also departed, never to return. Some time afterwards, having an English caller who said he would like a glass of whisky, I went to my cellar where the eleven bottles which had been given me had been stored, and there was not one to be found. I then understood the reason why, first the jealous husband and then the attractive wife, had passed out of my existence.

The man, however, I believe, I saw again some years later amongst a crowd of patients at the Charité hospital. It was at the time when Doctor Luys was conducting the famous hypnotic experiments which first of all brought him universal reputation, to be followed almost immediately by universal ridicule. It may be remembered that an investigation conducted in Paris by Mr Ernest Hart, of *The British Medical Journal*, established the fact that Dr Luys had been duped by the two women media whom he employed to demonstrate the various phenomena he exhibited in proof of his theory. He held it possible to relieve great pain in a patient by transferring it from him while in a hypnotic condition to a medium, also hypnotised, who was strong and well enough to bear it more easily. He also professed to be able to pass

diseases in the same way from the exhausted body of a dying person to somebody else, physically able to cast it off readily. All kinds of follies were being practised at the time at the Charité, where in hypnotism, Luys and his followers believed they had found the panacea for all ills. I saw a poor man sitting in a room gazing at a revolving mirror, the apparatus which is used for snaring larks, and I was told that he had been spending two hours a day like that for the past three weeks. It was hoped that in this way a horrible claret birthmark which disfigured the whole of one side of his face would be caused to disappear, and I was seriously informed by the physician in charge that already a great diminution in the intensity of the stain had taken place. Drunkenness, it was maintained, could be readily cured by the power of hypnotic suggestions.

To this I attributed the presence amongst the expectant clients of the man I have referred to. I believe that there was something in this claim of the Charité doctors to be able to cure intemperance by suggestion, because some time later I interviewed at the consulting rooms of Doctor Berillon, a reformed absinthe-drinker, who told me that certainly since he had attended this "consultation" he had lost his liking for this spirit. "Which," he added, "pleases my wife and her mother much more than it does me."

A prominent French physician whom I consulted on the efficacy of hypnotism in these cases declared that some results had certainly been obtained amongst the victims of alcoholism. "At anyrate," he added, "it is certainly far better as a cure than

those injections of gold which are being recommended by certain American doctors. Gold," he said, " is excellent when it comes from the patient to the doctor, very good indeed; but it is bad, very bad, from the doctor to the patient."

It was at the time of my visit to the Charité that Doctor Luys explained to me his theory of the luminous rays of different colours, which proceed from every human body and which are visible to people in the hypnotic trance. The colour of these rays differed, according to his theory, with the temperament and character of the person under examination. The violent, bad-tempered man emitted scarlet rays, the affectionate woman diffulged an agreeable pink. He was much excited over his alleged discovery and insisted on my accompanying him home to his house, where he showed me a large album full of water-colour sketches of subjects who had been examined by his media. It was the most curious collection of nonsense. Yet the poor gentleman was terribly in earnest, and the ridicule which was heaped upon him later broke his heart and helped to kill him. He was a very religious man; there was a *prie-Dieu* by his bedside, and pious books were mingled on his table with his strange pseudo-scientific pamphlets.

Curiously enough many years later the matter of the *n*-rays, as they were called then, came up again, and articles on the subject which appeared in one of the magazines in London attracted much attention. I had been unable to " see my way " to make any use of that conversation I had had with the doctor, or of the abundant material for

illustrations which he had offered to put at my disposal. But a novelty always has its value in the journalistic market. Of course this description of the *n*-rays was only a novelty in the sense that any Parisian matter is somehow always welcome to the reading public, and somehow seems perennially fresh. This axiom was first inculcated into me by Richard Whiteing, that prince amongst Paris correspondents, when as a young man I was seeking his advice on my work in that capital. "The public," he said, "seems never to tire of reading about Paris, and nothing Parisian ever grows stale. Why, only a day or two ago I noticed in one of the American Sunday papers a long article describing the Champs-Elysées. Surely one would have thought that on the Champs-Elyseés, from a descriptive point of view, the last word was said long ago."

That in the case of this book also Mr Whiteing's axiom may prove itself true, is the hope with which these reminiscences of life in Paris may be brought to a close.

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